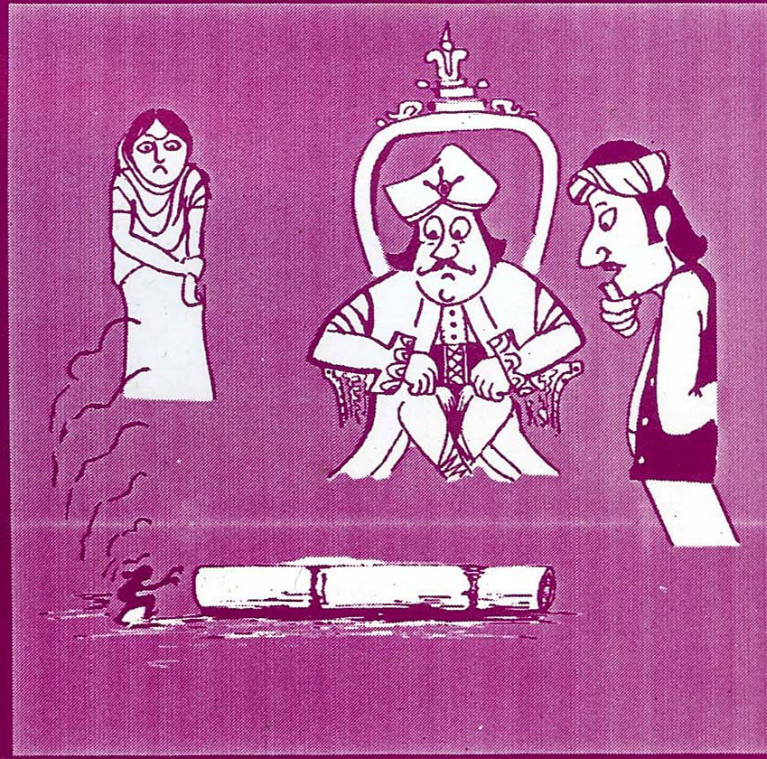


Folktales of Manipur

Revised and Enlarged Edition



Cultural Research Centre Manipur

Folktales of Manipur

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Translated into English by
Kamaljit Chirom

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A Collection of Manipuri Folktales

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Publisher's Note

It is an objective of Cultural Research Centre Manipur (CRCM) to act as a forum for the collection, preservation and distribution of the centuries-old culture of the different ethnic communities of Manipur who have been living together for ages. The fertile land of this small state gave birth to many form of language, tradition, folklore, costumes, etc., the knowledge of which needs to be developed in today's fast-changing world.

As a part of the objective, CRCM is bringing out this book called "*Folktales of Manipur*" with a selected list of folktales from the collection of B. Jayantakumar Sharma and Dr Chirom Rajketan Singh. This collection includes folktales from the hills and the valley of Manipur. The varied geographical terrain of the state has many folktales of various tastes and themes describing and incorporating the lifestyle, fears, aspirations and other aspects of their society.

Together the scattered elements of a marginalised culture and give it its distinct form and

represent it to the public is a laborious work requiring patience and passion. For that we are thankful to B. Jayantakumar Sharma and Dr Chirom Rajketan Singh for their contributions. Their original folktales in Manipuri was translated into English for a wider audience by Kamaljit Chirom, to whom also our thanks goes. I also thank all those involved in the endeavour to bring out this book.

The readers of this book are welcomed to give any form of suggestions and feedback which would help us in making this book better.

K. Meghachandra Meetei
Secretary
Cultural Research Centre Manipur

PREFACE

Manipur, although a small state, is inhabited by a number of ethnic groups. Geographically Manipur is divided into the hills and the valley areas, once-tenth of the total area being occupied by the valley and the remaining, the hills. The valley area is surrounded by hills from all directions. Meitei ancestors have described this land as being "surrounded by nine hill ranges." The valleys inhabited mainly by the Meiteis, the largest community in the states, while the hills are inhabited by various tribes. These communities have been living in this land for centuries with a long history of culture and tradition.

When Manipur became a part of India in 1949, 29 communities recognized as Scheduled Tribes under the Indian constitution. They are Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Koirao, Koireng, Kom, Lamkang, Mao, Maram, Maring, Mizo, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Purul, Ralte, Sema, Simte, Tangkhul, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou. Besides these twenty-nine communities five more communities have also been included into the

list of schedule tribe in 2012 under the constitution of India (Schedule Tribes) order (Amendment) Act 2011 (No. 2 of 2012) dated 8th January, 2012. The five communities which are subsequently added into the list are: Kharam, Poumai, Tarao, Mate and any Kuki tribes. Still several communities have also been trying to include themselves into the list of Schedule Tribes. Meanwhile, these communities are grouped with the community that has the closest linguistics and cultural affinity. Some small communities are already losing their uniqueness as they are being merged with bigger groups.

Of the nine districts in Manipur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Lamangdong (Bishnupur) lie in the central valley region of the state which is also called the Imphal valley. These four districts are mainly inhabited by the Meiteis. The Kabuis, a major grouping Tamenglong district, also live in the valley in large numbers. The Tangkhuls are found mainly in Ukhrul district. The main communities living in Senapati district are Mao, Maram, Paomai, Kharam, Thadou, Koirao, Chiru, Chothe, Purum, Kacha Naga, Kom and Sema. Anal, Aimol, Maring, Moyon, Monsang, Lamkang and Chothe live in Chandel district. The main tribes of Churachandpur district are Hmar, Mizo, Ralte, Paite, Gangte, Zou, Simte, Salte, Vaiphei and Kom. These various tribes living in Manipur have their own culture and traditional, languages, dress, folklore oral history, religion, etc.

History of origin of these communities have existed in the form of oral history. Efforts are being made by some tribes to convert the oral history into written form.

As the people of Manipur have a rich cultural history in the various fields of art, including martial arts, this small kingdom remained powerful and could stay independent from its neighbours for a very long time in history.

Among the various communities living in Manipur, the Meiteis are the one to a written script of their own - it is called Meitei Mayek. Because of this, they have written form of history, religious texts, health and medicine, and of many other fields. Since the Meitei language has been a sort of lingua franca among the many communities of Manipur, it is now commonly know as Manipuri language. The other communities of Manipur have their history and their folklore in oral form which has been passed on for many generations to this day. The absence of written manuscripts and the conversion of most of the tribals of Manipur to Christianity have led to a slow extinction of these priceless oral traditional which include in it history, legends, folksongs, folkdances, proverbs, folktales, etc. There have been efforts from some quarters of these different communities to bring out books on these ancient oral forms.

Folktale is one of the forms of oral literatures that is on its decline. The huge popularity of

television, the increasing number of educational institutions, and change of religion are some of the reasons for this. Elderly people no longer have time to tell tales to their children as the younger generation are busy going about their homework and tuitions and whatever little leisure time they have is spent on television. However, the recent inclusion of folktales in school syllabus is a appreciable step.

In this volume, the first twenty-three tales are of the Meiteis and the tales from twenty-four to thirty - seven belong to the hill and chakpas communities of Manipur. *Shampha*, *The Seven Brothers Who Went Hunting* and *The Obstinate Orphan* are tales from the Purum Chothe community of Chandel district, *Mareengthei* is from the Tangkhuls of Ukhrul, *Abung Rangeng* of Koirao Thangal, *The Nungshuk Catcher* of Chakpa Andro, *Lenchanghoi* and *Moltinchaan* of the Thadous of M. Songil Village of Churachandpur district, *Chem Taatpa Thuming* and *The Stepmother* of the Koms of Khongnangpi, *Thumkhel* of the Anals, *Khekmal of Thiling* of the Kharams of Kharam Pallel, *The Clever Frog* of the Chirus and *Lukhrabi Yumpham* belongs to many communities like the Kharamas and Purums. These folktales have been incorporated in this book the folktales of Manipur.

Dr. Chirom Rajketan

INTRODUCTION

Folktales are simple, easy to remember stories, passed on through oral tradition through the ages that elderly lovingly narrate to their grandchildren. The logic to folktales are not questioned, for they can have unnatural or impossible events like animals and plants talking, man turning into python, fairies helping son of widow ... and many more.

Folktales are imaginary tales told with the main purpose of entertaining the listeners. So the tellers have a liberty of modifying or adding the tales as and when the situation and context demands it. This, in turn, has given rise to variations of the same tales over the ages.

Folktales are also good sources of wisdom. More often than not, a moral lesson is given at the end of a tale. Moral lessons given to the children with the help of a folktales is more effective and easier to remember for a longer period than a simple moral lesson.

We could, however old we get, never forget the childhood stories that were told to us about. The Hare and the Tortoise, The Shepherd Who Lied, or The Monkey and the Bread. It was through the folktales of Panchatantra that Vishnu Sharma gave valuable lessons to his disciples - the princes.

Folktales can be of different types, such as *Animal Tales* - *The Clever Fox, The Dove's Feast, The Deer and the Crow*; *Magical Tales* - *The Prince Who Was a pig, The Fool's Fate, Sanarembi and Chaishra*; *Jokes* - *Chongkhu and The Tiger*,

The Flying Elephant, The Shy Husband; Tales of Deceit - The Lazy Woman, The Monkey and the Bread, The Devil Without Jaws; Other Tales - Khambraangchaak, The Animals' Conference; Proved Tales - Ita Thaomei, The Shepherd, Patsoi Taoman, etc.

The culture of a community is reflected in its folktales. Sometimes society's belief and structure form the elements on which folktales are based as for instance the Meeteis believe that doves are incarnations of their ancestors. So, when doves comes near one's house, grains and water are kept in the courtyard for the dove to eat. This myth is shown in Sanarembi Chaisra. This same folktales also is regarded to be the original source of the Meetei proved "Hei leira thang leita, thang leira hei leita." (When there's fruit there's no knife, when there's knife there's no fruit.) Similarly there are also other popular proverb and saying that, according to belief, had their origins in folktales. Some of the traditional practices and taboos may seem like superstition - but they are part of one's tradition nonetheless; therefore, one can know a lot about a land's or a community's culture, beliefs and myths, social structure, art and literature from its folktales.

Some folktales of Manipur are published in this book as in English for those who don't know Manipuri. These tales are from different parts of Manipur, including the hills and the plains. It is our belief that reading this tales will give a small picture of the social mindset and culture of these different communities which, if happens, would mean a huge success for our small effort.

Folktales from B. Jayantakumar Sharma

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chasing the elephant. When he had run quite a distance, he said to himself, "How stupid I am! The frog must be left far back." And he stopped and looked back. The frog jumped in front of the tiger while he was looking back and gave a croak. When the tiger heard the croak, he turned and was startled to see the frog in front of him. "I win," said the frog with a smile. "No," the tiger retorted, "the race is not over." And he started running again. The frog also jumped on his back. The tiger kept running and running until he was certain that this time the frog was left behind. So he stopped and looked back while the frog jumped in front of him and croaked. The tiger ran again saying that the race was not over. And again the frog jumped on the back of the tiger and took a piggyback ride. The tiger was feeling



humiliated for being not able to defeat a frog in a race. So he kept running and running. He got really exhausted, but he didn't stop. He kept running. He could breathe no more, his chest was throbbing as if it would burst. At last he fell down totally exhausted. He slowly turned his head to look back, but he heard the frog croaking in front of him again. The tiger was so startled and shocked and tired that he died at the spot.

The frog saved himself and the elephant with his cleverness. He also saved the animals of the forest from the tiger. From that day onward, the animals lived peacefully again.



Houdong Lamboiba and Pebet



A long time ago a mother Pebet hatched seven young ones in her nest which was built within a thick bush.

She fed and looked after her children with love and care.

Near Pebet's nest there lived a monk-cat. Every morning the cat took a bath and put vermilion on his forehead and would roam around Pebet's nest chanting "*Samu Kaka Lili Ka-Kak*". When asked he replied that he was going for prayer. Whenever he saw Pebet's children, his mouth watered. Oh, how he longed to eat them. But being a monk how could he eat them! But he devised a cunning plan. One day he called mother Pebet with a harsh meow,

“Oye, Pebet.”

Pebet answered, “O Yes, sir,” very solemnly.

“How beautiful am I?”

Pebet could see the intention of the monk-cat. She knew that if she drove him away, he would eat her children by force. She would not anger him, not until her children had learnt to fly.



She replied, “Oh my, sir! How could I describe your beauty. You are as beautiful as a *shangbai* full of rice, a pot full of water, a straight string of *ngari*, and the *tayal* blossoming.”

The monk-cat was pleased. He meowed, “Very good. Raise your children, make them big.” Saying this he went away chanting *Samu Kaka Lili Ka-Kak*.

A few days later he came back and called, “Oye, Pebet.”

“O yes, sir.”

“Tell me, how beautiful I am.”

She gave the same reply as before and he went away happily. Meanwhile, she taught her children to fly from one branch to another, and then from one tree to another. Within days they were bug enough to fly around by themselves. Seeing them, the mother became confident enough to challenge the shrewd monk-cat.

Some days later the cat came. He asked, “Hoi, Pebet. How beautiful am I?” This time Pebet gave him a mouthful. She yelled back from the tree, “You ugly, *ngari*-eating big-eyed monk-cat! You look like a smoked pot.” The infuriated cat meowed, “Alright, today I’ll eat you all,” and he jumped at the birds. Mother Pebet shouted, “Fly, my children,” and they all flew to the top on the tree. But the youngest pebet, who couldn’t fly properly, was a little too slow to start. She was caught by the monk-cat. He held her tightly in his palm, looked hungrily at her and said, “You are going to be my supper now.”

Suddenly, Pebet called out from the top of the tree, “Oh my, sir!”

“What is it, Pebet?”

“Are you going to eat my child?”

“Yes.”

“Then you should be very careful while eating a pebet. If you don’t eat them properly, they are not tasty at all.”

“Then how do I eat her?”

“You should do like this,” she continued, “First of all give her a good bath; put her on a piece of leaf and dry her in the morning sun. If you eat her then, you will get the best taste. Believe me.”

The monk-cat did as he was told by Pebet. He bathed the young pebet, put her on a banana leaf to dry in the sun by holding her in his palm. As soon as her feathers began drying, she started moving her wings. Her mother was watching from the top of the tree. When she saw that her daughter was ready to fly, she cried, “Fly, *echa tombi!*” The young pebet dropped her faeces on the banana leaf and up she flew.

The monk-cat shouted furiously, “Oh no, it flew away!” He hungrily licked up the bird’s faeces from the leaf. He found that it was very tasty. He suddenly cried out, “If the dropping is so good, how tasty the body would have been!” And so he

went away disappointed.

The mother Pebet was sitting of top of a tree with her children and they were singing happily.

“The cunning cat

Ended up eating bird shit.”

The monk-cat was too greedy to eat that he got only droppings. So it is said by the wise that those who are too eager to eat, only gets to lick.



Doves' Feast

In a forest there lived a pair of doves. One day they invited the Raven, the Crane, the Heron and the Owl to lunch. The four guests were getting



ready for the lunch that day. The Raven was polishing its beak, the Crane was plucking out his worn-out feathers, the Heron scrubbed himself and the Owl was sharpening his claws. They all arrived at the Doves' house for the lunch. He-Dove and She-Dove prepared a nice meal for them. The lunch was served and it had all the tastiest dishes to eat. He-Dove came in front of his guests and joined his wings as a way of greeting and said, "I pray all of you to feel comfortable at my humble abode. I've arranged this meal as my father's

last wish. At his deathbed, he gave me these instructions: 'My son, the four of them helped us during our time of need. I couldn't repay them during my lifetime. You should respect them all the time. Feed them well and ask for their blessings. So I've invited you today. My father also told me to pray for prosperity from the eldest among you. So, please, take your seats according to your ages. I and my wife will be your hosts today. We ask for your kindness to help us fulfill my father's last wishes.'

All the four birds were worried to hear He-Dove. They didn't know who the eldest among them was. So they kept looking at each other and waited silently to see who came forward to take the first seat. As it was getting late, He-Dove implored, "Please start your meal." The four of them were also getting very hungry, but still no one dared to be the first to come forward.

The one who was the hungriest among them was the Raven. He had not eaten anything for the last two days. He could no longer resist the sight of the tasty food laid in front of him. Quickly, he jumped in to take the first seat. The Crane was very angry. He flew on top of the Raven and plucked out his black feathers. The Raven also fought back and flapped the Crane with its wings. While they were

going on with their fight, the Heron came in to take the first seat. Seeing this, the Owl, who was dozing lazily, beat the Heron with its wings. Then the Heron and the Owl also started fighting. The Doves came between them and shouted, "Please stop fighting. You are all wise and elderly people and it is such a shame." But they continued fighting. And in their scuffle, the meal was destroyed.

Unable to stop the fighting, He-Dove went and informed all the birds. When all the birds came to the Doves' house, everything was explained to them. After hearing the story, the Vulture asked the Raven, "Mr. Raven, why did you take the first seat without knowing who is the eldest? How old are you?"

The Raven replied, "Hear, O mighty one. We Ravens are very old birds. We have been there since the first river-dredging was done in the land of the Meiteis. I was the one who asked the *Nongoubi* bird to help in drinking the river water."

The Vulture then turned to the Crane and asked, "You leggy Crane! Why did you stop the old Raven? How old are you?"

"O mighty bird," the Crane answered, "The Raven is very young compared to me. Cranes have been there since the time of Nongda Lairen

Pakhangba, who was the great-grandfather of Lainingthou, who dredged the rivers.”

Everybody believed the Crane to be older than the Raven. The Vulture looked at the Heron and said, “Now, Heron. Tell us how old you are. Why should you have any objections to your elders taking the first seat?”

The Heron said, “O strong one among the birds, please know that the Raven and Crane are nowhere near me in terms of age. We were among the first birds created by Sanamahi and Pakhangba after the creation of the Universe. Nongda Lairen Pakhangba and river-dredging are only events of yesterday.”

The birds were awed to hear the Heron declare his age. The Vulture thought that they have all been arguing uselessly. At last he said to the Owl, “Are you sleeping, my friend?”

The Owl opened his eyes and cooed, “What is it, son?”

The Vulture continued, “Four of you were invited for lunch by the Doves. We are discussing who the eldest among you is. You seemed to have missed it while you were sleeping. How old are you, my old friend?”

“What did you say?” the Owl shouted. He was hard of hearing and indicated the Vulture to talk louder.

“I said, how old are you, my old bird?” the Vulture spoke louder.

The Owl stared at him and retorted, “Have you forgotten your manners? Call me *ipu*, not ‘old bird’.”

The Vulture corrected himself and put his question again, “Yes, yes. How old are you, *ipu*? The Heron claims that he was the first bird created by Sanamahi?”

The Owl snapped, “I am too old even to remember my age. The Heron is not even the great-great-grandson of my great-grandson.”

All the birds looked at each other in surprise. The Vulture looked at the Owl wide open eyes.

Feeling their reaction, the Owl smiled. “Well, well. I shall tell you how old I am. You know that Atiya Guru Sidaba is the God of Gods and also the father of Sanamahi, the creator of the universe. Well, He is my son-in-law. He calls me ‘*iku*’. The other Gods used to call me ‘*maku*’ — *Gurusidaba’s maku*. Even today everybody calls me by that name.

That is why I told you, I can't remember my age. So, now, tell me, who is the eldest, the Heron or me. If you don't believe me, you can go and ask Atiya Guru Sidaba."

The Owl's story was so convincing, every bird went quiet. Slowly they started discussing among themselves in whispers, "It must be true. Just look at him, he looks that old." After a little thought the Vulture bowed before the Owl and said, "Forgive me. We now know that you are the eldest among the birds. Today, I shall serve you myself, *ipu*. Please sit on my back and I will carry you."

Thus the Vulture flew away with the Owl on his back and all the birds followed him. The two Doves were left standing at their home.

A good speaker is always right, so proved by the clever Owl.

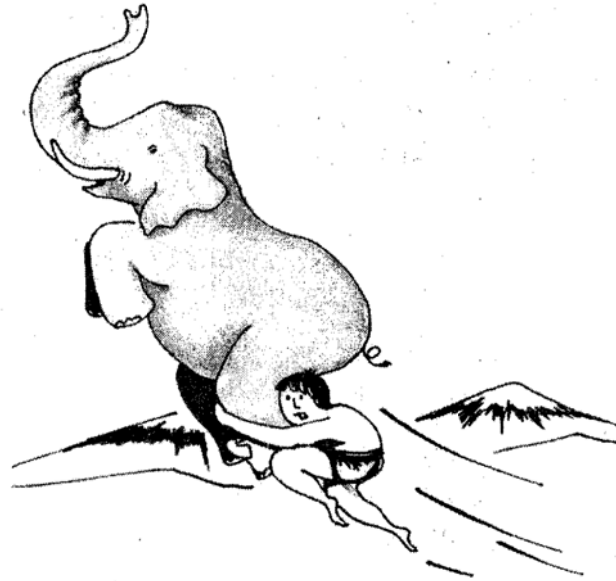


The Fool's Fate

A fool lived with his wife in a village, and that was a very long ago. One day as the fool was working in his paddy field, an elephant came down from the sky and started eating the crop. The fool got very angry. He thought of punishing the elephant. Quietly he came up from behind and caught one of the hind legs of the elephant with both his hands. The animal was startled and, so, suddenly flew up in the air. It flew up higher and higher in the air while the fool still held on to its leg.

The elephant flew higher than the clouds until it reached heaven. Seeing a live man in heaven, Soraren, the god of the sky, asked the fool how he reached there. The fool simply answered, "The elephant ate my crop. I caught his leg and he flew me here. I should be paid for my loss."

Lord Soraren was pleased at the simplicity and sincerity of the fool. He said, "I shall certainly pay you for the loss of your crop." Then He ordered



His servants to bring lots of gold and silver which He presented to the man.

He said, "I am giving you all these gold and silver as a price for your crop that my elephant has eaten and destroyed."

The fool looked at all the gold and silver and exclaimed, "I can't carry all these by myself. And it is getting late, my house is very far and I can't go back now." Then Soraren ordered His elephant to take the man and his treasures to his home. Thus, the fool and his wife became rich.

A clever man lived in the same locality as the fool. The clever man's wife was a vegetable seller. Everybody was talking about the fool and his wife getting rich overnight. The women in the market talked about the jewels the fool's wife wore, and the coins she freely gave away. One day the clever man asked the fool how he became rich. The fool told the clever man without any hesitation. The clever man was very happy in his heart. He said, "Soraren is very rich. He wouldn't be worried about giving away a little of his gold to us. I also want to become rich like you. Let us go to heaven together and we'll bring back more treasure." They agreed to it. From that time onwards they started waiting for the elephant in the paddy field.

Some days later the elephant came down from heaven and began eating the crop. The fool slowly came from behind and quickly caught one of the hind legs. As the startled elephant leaped to the air, the clever man caught the waist of the fool. The three of them flying up was quite a sight. The fool was hanging from the elephant and the clever man was hanging from the fool.

While the elephant was still flying, the two men were talking between themselves. The clever man asked, "Friend, how much treasure does Soraren

have?" The fool replied, "This much," and he let go of the elephant's leg to measure with his hands. As soon as his hands were free they fell towards the ground. They fell and fell and then hit the ground. But as the clever man was beneath the fool, he fell first and the fool fell above him. The clever man died and the fool survived to live happily with his wife till the end of his days.

One should not be greedy. The clever man became so greedy that he got nothing, but lost his life.



Sanarembi and Chaishra

In a kingdom, there was a king's noble who had two wives. The first wife of the noble was called Yangkhureima, and the second, Sangkhureima. Yangkhureima had a daughter named Sanarembi, and a son. The second wife had only a daughter named Chaishra.

Sanarembi was not only a beautiful girl, but also kind and well-mannered. Everyone liked her. But Sangkhureima's daughter Chaishra was ugly, had thick brows and there was no comparison of her wickedness. So, Chaishra and her mother were very jealous of Sanarembi and her mother.

Sorrowful days came when the noble subject passed away at a time Sanarembi's little brother was only a baby. Although they were quite well to do when he was alive, the family became poorer and poorer after his death. The two mothers worked hard to raise their children by selling firewood collected from the forest. But even during those hard days

Chaishra and her mother never stopped thinking about ways to get rid of Sanarembi and her mother.

One day Yangkhureima and Sangkhureima went fishing at the Ngaral Lake. Yangkhureima caught fish every time she dragged her *long*. But Sangkhureima caught only snakes in hers. As sunset was drawing near, Sangkhureima said, "*Iche*, the fig tree over there has lots of ripe fruits. I'll climb and drop the fruits, you catch them." She climbed the tree and started plucking the fig fruits. She dropped some ripe ones for her sister and also ate some herself.

"*Iche*, this time I am going to drop the ripest one. Close your eyes and open your mouth," Sangkhureima shouted from above. Yangkhureima did as she was told. As she was waiting for the fruit to fall in her mouth, Sangkhureima poured down the snakes from her basket on top of her sister. The snakes bit Yangkhureima and she died. Sangkhureima pushed the dead body into the marsh, took her sister's bucket with the fishes and went home.

Chaishra was very excited to see her mother returning with lots of fishes. When Sanarembi could not see her mother, she asked, "*Imaton*, where is my mother, is she still fishing?"

“Your mother is very greedy. She is still at the lake trying to fish a bucket-full,” Chaishra’s mother replied curtly.

Chaishra ate the fishes with her mother. Sanarembi didn’t have any fish to feed her little brother. So she asked for some fish from her step-mother saying that she would give back the same amount when her mother returned. Chaishra’s mother gave her the small fingerlings that were stuck to the bucket.

It was already night and Sanarembi’s mother had not returned. The brother and the sister fell asleep leaning on a pillar, waiting for their mother. In her dream, Sanarembi saw her mother. Her mother spoke softly to her, “*Ibema*, you are waiting for me, but I am no longer alive. Your *imaton* dropped me snakes instead of figs and killed me. I can’t come, my dear. Tomorrow morning come fishing with a *long* and you will find me in the form of a tortoise. You have to catch me and put me in the *isaiphu* for five days. After five days I will be a woman and three of us will live together again.” Sanarembi suddenly woke up and found herself crying.

The next morning Sanarembi went fishing at the lake her mother told her in her dream. At first she

caught only a *ngakha*. She picked it up and said, "Oh *ngakha ninganbi*, I am fishing for my mother," and she let it go. After sometime she caught a *ngamu*. She said the same thing and let it go. She kept fishing for a long time but couldn't catch the tortoise. She looked around in despair and started crying. "Oh mother, where are you?" With tears rolling down her cheeks she began fishing again. This time she caught the tortoise. Happily she took it home and kept it in the *isaiphu*.

Chaishra happened to see the tortoise in the *isaiphu*. She came running to her mother and said, "Mother, Sanarembi has a tortoise. I want to eat that tortoise." Sangkhureima called Sanarembi and asked her to boil the tortoise for Chaishra. Sanarembi cried, but she was helpless. She took the *isaiphu*, placed in on fire and began boiling it. The tortoise cried out from inside the pot, "Sanarembi, it has reached my ankle." Sanarembi immediately pulled out the firewood to put off the fire. Chaishra told her mother what happened. Sangkhureima took a burning piece of wood and pressed it on the head of Sanarembi. Yelling in pain Sanarembi put up the fire again. Sometime later the tortoise cried out again, "Sanarembi, it has reached my waist." Sanarembi pulled out the firewood again. Just then Sangkhureima

pressed the burning wood on her head. Sanarembi tended the fire again. When the tortoise called out the third time, its voice was too weak to be heard, "Sanarembi, it has reached my chest." Sanarembi cried "mother" and pulled out the burning woods from under the pot. Her step-mother burned her head again. She tended the fire again. At last the tortoise was cooked and Chaishra and her mother ate it. Sanarembi's mother could never regain human form again.

Years passed. Sanarembi and Chaishra grew up into lasses. One day, the two of them were going to the river to fetch water as always. Sanarembi carried a *pun* and Chaishra, a *sanabun*. It so happened that the prince of that land and the son of a noble were coming that way. When they saw the two girls carrying water, the prince sang:

Sanabun pubi pamde

Chegaipun pubi pammi

Chaishra was very angry to hear that. Next day Chaishra's mother made them change their pots. Sanarembi carried the *sanabun* and Chaishra carried the *pun*. They met the prince and his friend at the same place as the day before. This time the prince sang:



Chegaipun pubi pamde

Sanabun pubi pammi

Without saying another word the prince came up to Sanarembi, put her on his horse and took her to his palace. The prince kept her happily in the palace, but she was worried for her little brother. She couldn't find a moment of peace. She cried all the time. When the prince came to know the reason of her sorrow, he brought her brother to her. Sanarembi was happy to get her brother and so she thanked the prince. Some days later she married the prince and became a princess. With the passage of time they were blessed with a beautiful son.

Chaishra and her mother's jealousy were only increasing all the time. Their aim was to ruin the life of Sanarembi. They thought of a plan to achieve their end. They invited Sanarembi to lunch. When she came, Chaishra asked her in a sweet voice, "Iche, your clothes and jewels are very beautiful. Can I put them on once?" Then she took all the clothes and jewels and put them on herself. After the lunch, Sanarembi said, "Chaishra, will you give me the clothes, it is time for me to go."

Chaishra snapped, "You don't want me to wear your clothes even for a moment. Now take that," and she threw them under the bed. As Sanarembi bent down to pick up the clothes, Chaishra's mother poured boiling water on her and killed her. Chaishra put on the clothes and jewels of Sanarembi again and her mother sent her to the palace impersonating her as Sanarembi. At the palace, the prince at once fell suspicious of Chaishra. But he kept quiet. In this way Chaishra spent some days in the palace as Sanarembi.

One day the royal cowherd was cutting grass. He heard the sound of a dove singing from above a tree near him. It sang:

"King forgets his wife

Prince will die
Clothes will tear.
O *Pangal* cowherd
Tell this
To your master
Or else horses and elephants
Will fall to the ground
Kukru ku ku khangmeitat!”

The cowherd told the prince of the unusual incident. The prince also remembered a dove that he had seen in his dreams a few days ago. He went to the place where the dove was seen. He took a handful of grain in his hand and called out, “Oh my dear. Is it your soul in the dove? Come and sit on my palm.”

The dove flew down to his palm and ate the grains. In the prince’s dream he had been told that if he kept the dove for five days it will become a human. So he took it to his palace and kept it in a bird cage. Chaishra was afraid the Sanarembi might come back. She killed the dove and made *chagem pomba* of it. The prince found that the dove was no longer in the

cage. He asked Chaishra where it was. She told him that she had cooked it. The prince's anger knew no bounds. He threw the food away at his backyard.

Some days later a lemon tree grew up from where the dish had fallen. The tree bore a fruit. One night Sanarembi came to the prince's dream and said, "Pluck the lemon when it is ripe. Keep it for five days inside the *chengphu*, I will come back to you as your Sanarembi." Next day, he made a fence around the lemon tree so that no one could come near it.

These new developments aroused Chaishra's fears again. Was the prince trying to the real Sanarembi back to life again? She would be punished severely, may even be sentenced to death if the truth was found out. She had to do something. One hot day, she found the cowherd looking for a fruit in the garden. She immediately knew what to do. She called him and told him that if he wanted to eat fruit, he could go and have the lemon in the back yard. He plucked it and took it home. When he was about to eat it, an urgent work came. He put the lemon in his *chengphu* and went away. For four days he forgot about the lemon altogether. On the noon of the fourth day he remembered and took it out to eat. But he couldn't find a knife. After some searching he found

a knife but lost the lemon. He got frustrated and exclaimed, "That's it, I am not eating it." On the fifth day the lemon turned into Sanarembi. The cowherd ran to the palace and told the prince whatever happened. The prince brought back Sanarembi to the palace. As for the wicked Chaishra, she was punished to death for her deeds.

Never forget, truth always triumphs.



Seven Pieces of bread

A long time ago, a poor widow and her son lived in a far off land. The son was a young man, but he was very lazy. He was so lazy that he had to be pushed so that he could start walking. Because of his laziness they became poorer and poorer. His mother had to work at other people's houses to earn whatever she could to keep themselves from starving. She tried everything to make her son a responsible person, but nothing could change him.

One day the lazy boy decided to make a journey to distant lands to earn his fortune. He asked his mother to prepare seven pieces of bread for his journey. His mother made the bread and packed them in a banana leaf. When he was all ready to go he asked his mother to push him. She pushed him and he reached the pond with a big peepal tree near it. He sat under the tree and took out his tiffin. Looking at the bread, he spoke loudly, "Which one of the seven shall I eat first? The first, or the second, or

the last? Or shall I eat them all?" He was heard by seven *helloi* sisters who were bathing in the pond at that time. They could see and hear him, but he could not see or hear them because they were gods. They thought he was talking about eating them. They got very frightened. So they appeared in front of him and said, "Don't eat us, please. We will give you something that will fulfill all your wishes." And they gave him a white goat. They continued, "Say what you wish to get and beat the goat three times and you will get it." The lazy boy came along happily pulling the goat. When the sun set, he went to a hut to spend the night. A poor couple lived in that hut. They let him stay but weren't able to give him any food. The lazy boy said, "Please, don't worry for tonight's food. Just give me three plates and three bowls." When he was given those things, he put them in front of the goat and said, "I need rice and curry," and he beat the goat three times with a stick. From nowhere the plates and bowls were filled with good and steamy food. Seeing this, the poor couple was dazzled beyond their wits. They wanted the wishing-goat for themselves. During the night, when the lazy boy was sleeping, they brought another white goat and replaced it with the wishing-goat. They hid the wishing-goat in their barn. In the morning the

lazy boy thanked his hosts and returned home with the false goat. When he reached home he told his mother everything that happened to him in his journey. His mother didn't believe him but she just kept quiet and watched. He bit the goat three times wishing for food. But no food came out. He hit the goat again and again, but still no food. The goat only neighed in pain. Unable to see what was going on, his mother stopped him. He was very angry. "Those *hellois* cheated me," he grunted. "Make me seven *kabok khoidums*, mother, and I'll teach them a lesson." The mother gave her son seven *kabok khoidums* and pushed him. He came to the same pond. He took out his *kabok* and said out aloud, "Which one shall I eat first? The first, the second, or the last?" Again the seven *helloi* sisters came out fearing that he has come back to eat them. The lazy boy told them what happened. They knew what really happened to the wishing-goat. This time they gave him a tortoise and a long rope.

On his way back, he entered the same hut again where he spent the other night. The couple was very happy thinking that he might have brought another precious thing. After food, they all went to sleep. Knowing that the lazy boy was asleep the couple came in quietly to take any useful thing he

had brought. But the lazy boy wasn't asleep. He caught them sneaking around his things. Her tied them with the rope and beat them on their heads with the back of the tortoise. They cried and asked him for forgiveness. "We took your wishing-goat, please forgive us. We won't steal again." They gave him back the real goat.

The poor mother and the son lived happily with the goat.



Denkha Paodabi

In a house, like any other, there lived a man and his wife. They lived a life like any other person. Only, that they had no children. They spent their evenings talking with each other sitting by the fireside.

One evening as they were talking as everyday, the man said, "Today let us play riddles. The loser will treat the other with *sareng*."

"Well then, you ask first," the wife said.

The man's riddle ran thus:

"A man with four hands

With a rucksack by his side,

Is dancing round and round.

Rolling around cheerfully is another man in front."

Then he said, "Now answer this riddle." The wife thought for a while but couldn't answer it. "I can't solve it. You say the answer," said she.

“Then you will have to treat *sareng*,” he continued, “The answer is what you do many times. You use a four-spoked wheel and when you rotate it the yarn-ball rotates in the front.”

The wife laughed out, “Oh! That one! Now let me ask. If you can’t answer than we are even. What is that that cries when fed and stops crying when you stop feeding?”

“That is simple. It is *kaptreng*.”

“You are right. So it’s my treat tomorrow.” And thus they went to sleep. But outside the wall of their house, Yenka Paodabee Saigung Pollibee, an old demon was listening to their conversation. She thought, “I shouldn’t lose this opportunity. Tomorrow I’ll impersonate the wife when she is away. She will be driven away by her husband. I’ll stay with him as his wife for few days and one day, when he is asleep, I’ll cut his throat and drink his blood. Oh! how tasty it will be!” She also went away that night happily.

The next morning, the wife finished her morning chores and went to market to buy fish. The demon was waiting for her to go. As soon as she was away, the demon turned herself, with her powers, into the wife. She put a *sareng* in her bag and went

to the house as if returning in a hurry. Seeing his wife returning so soon, the man was surprised. He said, "You just went out! How could you come back so fast with the *sareng*?"

The demon replied, "I was very lucky to find a woman selling *sareng* near our house."

The man didn't have a single doubt that she was his real wife. As he took the fish from her, he said, "I'll prepare it, you go and start cooking." After he had done it he gave it to his wife in the kitchen. "Cook it well," and went out. Just as he was stepping out of the door, he saw another woman just like his wife, carrying a *sareng* and coming to the house. He couldn't believe his eyes. He stammered, "How did you come out? You were inside the kitchen cooking!"

"What do you mean?" she replied, "I've just returned from the market. Who came, who's there in the kitchen?" and she rushed into the kitchen. In the kitchen she saw a woman just like her sitting there and cooking. The amazed wife exclaimed, "Who are you sitting here in my house and taking my place? How dare you!"

To this, the one in the kitchen retorted, "You tell me who you are, you devil! Don't think of stealing my man from me. I am his wife, the queen of this house. Now get out of my house."



These words infuriated the other. "I'll show you who I am," and saying this she jumped towards the other woman and caught her hair and threw her on the ground. The other one also got up and pulled the other's hair. And as they were fighting, the kitchen was turned into a mess. The man watched helplessly. There in front of him, the two women, who looked exactly same, were fighting. How could he know which one was his real wife? At last the neighbours came and stopped the fight. But even the elders of the village were not able to solve the problem. Both of them looked the same and both of them were saying that each one of them was the real one. One of the elders said, "Everybody listen. This is a problem beyond any human power. This is a matter

for the Gods to decide. The king is the representative of God. Let us take the case to him."

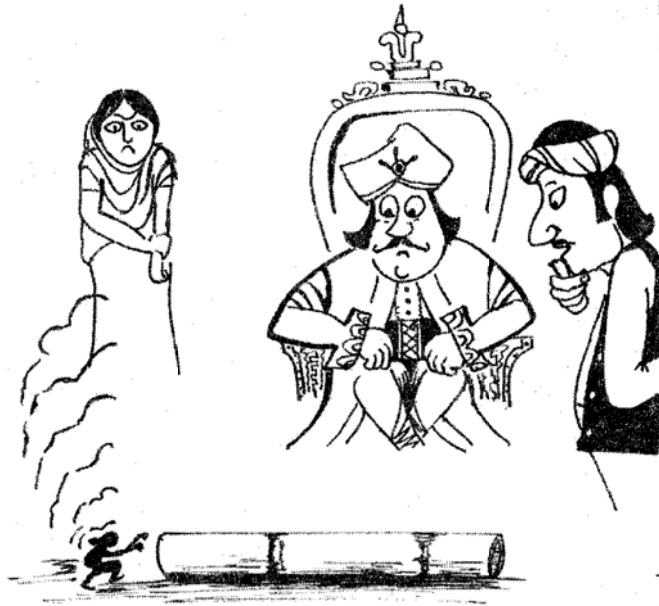
And so they all went to the king. The king heard the whole story. With a thoughtful face, the king said, "Hmm! This is surely a case to be judged by the Gods. But before going to that let us try to solve it amicably. God's judgement could imply pain." Everyone approved the idea. The king looked at the two women and said, "I ask you to think carefully and after that the false one may say so and no one will be punished." One of the woman said, "My Lord, please do justice and punish the guilty."

The other said, "My Lord, please do God's justice, let the guilty perish."

"So be it," the king declared, "As both of you are firm on your stands, let the Great God show us the truth." He called his guard and said, "Bring me a hollow bamboo pipe and send for the priest."

The bamboo pipe was brought. It was hollow on both ends. The priest also came. He bowed in front of the king and said, "What orders do I have from my king?"

"*Ipu*," said the king, "Offer this bamboo pipe to Lainingthou so that He may bless it with His powers." As he said this, he made a secret gesture



to the priest. The priest immediately understood what the king was hinting at. He took the pipe outside and came back after a few moments with the pipe placed on a banana leaf.

The king then spoke out aloud for all in the court to hear, "The pipe has been blessed with God's powers. Both of you stand on one end of the pipe. Two of my strong men will stand on the other end." And it was done.

“Listen carefully, two of you,” continued the king, “Only the real one will be able to go through this pipe. So, who will go first?”

The demon was very happy. But the real one bowed her head in disappointment. The demon said, “My lord, I’ll go first.”

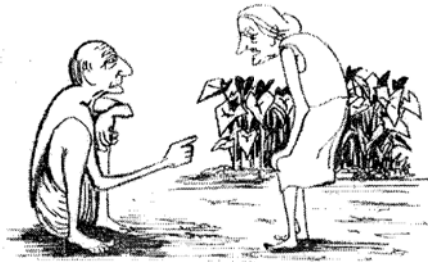
Then she reduced herself to a size small enough to go into the pipe. Everybody gave a huge sigh in fear and surprise. She went into the pipe and at the very moment the king ordered his two men to block both ends of the pipe. When the ends were blocked the demon was trapped inside. She put up all her strength to get out, but couldn’t. The king ordered the pipe to be thrown into the fire. At that time the demon cried out, “O king, please forgive me. I am Yenkha Paodabee Saigang Pollibi, the old demon. I wanted this man so much that I turned myself into his wife. Please don’t kill me. I’ll never do such things again.”

The king ordered her to be released, and so she was. The people praised the king to be righteous and wise. The man and the woman also spent the rest of their days without any enemies.



The old couple and the taro plants

In a village near a forest there lived an old couple. They had no children. They lived by themselves. In the forest, there was a group of monkeys. The old man and the woman treated the monkeys like their children as they had none.



One day the old couple was planting taro plants in their kitchen garden. The monkeys saw what they were doing. The leader of the monkeys came to the old couple and said excitedly, “No, no, *e pu eben*. That is not the way to plant taros.”

“How is it done, my son?” asked the old man.

The monkey started explaining, "First of all you choose the best tubers and peel them. Put them in a pot and boil them till they are soft. When they become cool, wrap them in banana leaves tightly and plant them. Next morning you will see how big they have grown."

The old couple believed the monkeys. They did as they were told: They selected the best tubers, boiled them, wrapped them and carefully put them in the soil and covered them.



In the middle of the night the monkeys came. They dug out all the taros and ate them. They uprooted giant inedible taros from the river bank and planted them in place of the taros. In the cover of the night they disappeared into the forest.

When morning came, the old woman was delighted to see that the taros they planted only the day before were fully grown. She woke her husband and told him what she saw. They both came out and looked again at the plants. They still couldn't believe their eyes. The old man said, "*Hanubi*, the monkeys were right. The taros are as tall as us. Let us cook some of them, they look tasty."

As she was cooking, the old man took a bath. When it was cooked, the old man ate it. "*Hanuba*, how is it?" asked the old woman.

"It is good," he replied eating.

But slowly he was feeling a tingling sensation in his throat. He was having an allergy. It became so bad that he couldn't bear it anymore. "*Hanubi, hentak. Hanubi, hentak!*" he cried and gasped. She hurriedly gave him some *hentak* and only after that his allergy was cured. The old woman thought how the taro could be the allergic one. So she tasted some of it. And indeed it was allergic. She cried,

"*Hanuba, hentak. Hanuba, hentak.*" She also took some *hentak* and she felt better. Realising that the monkeys had tricked them they became very angry.

The old man told his wife, "Put a cloth over me and I'll pretend to be dead. You cry loud enough for the monkeys to hear. When they come you tell them that I died after eating the taros. And then ask them to take me outside. When they come near me, I'll beat them with this stick."

Stretching her legs and lifting her hands the old woman started crying:

"O my old man.

You died eating taros,

Come back eating pumpkin."

The monkeys certainly heard her crying, for they came. They asked, "*Iben*, why are you crying?" "My children," she said crying, "We planted the taros as you told us. But when we ate it, he died. He is lying inside, can you bring him out in the lawn." The monkeys were sad to hear it. They all went inside the house with gloomy faces. As soon as they came near the old man, he took up his stick and started beating them. Frightened, they all ran away.

The old couple told each other that the monkeys would come back, so they had to find a

place to hide. The climbed the attic and hid there. The monkeys came back and started looking for them in the house. Meanwhile, the rope binding the attic broke and the attic, along with the two old persons, came crashing down on the monkeys. This time also they fled.

Fearing that they would come back even stronger this time, the two of them hid inside a *kharung*. The monkeys came again. As they were looking for the old couple, the old man whispered in his wife's ears, "I want to gas." "Do it quietly," said she. He passed it without a sound. Sometime later the old woman whispered, "I want to gas." "Slowly, *hanubi*," said he. But she couldn't control it, and with a bang she farted. It was so loud that the monkeys ran away never to come back.

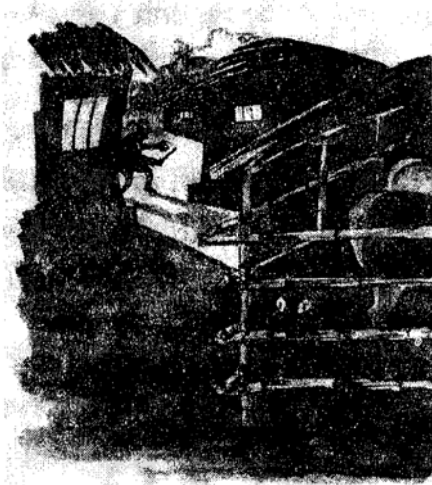


Tapta

It was night. A baby was crying. The mother was unable to calm the baby down. She took it in her arms, then tried putting it on her back, walked around a bit — but the baby kept crying. Then she tried scaring the baby by saying that a horse was coming,

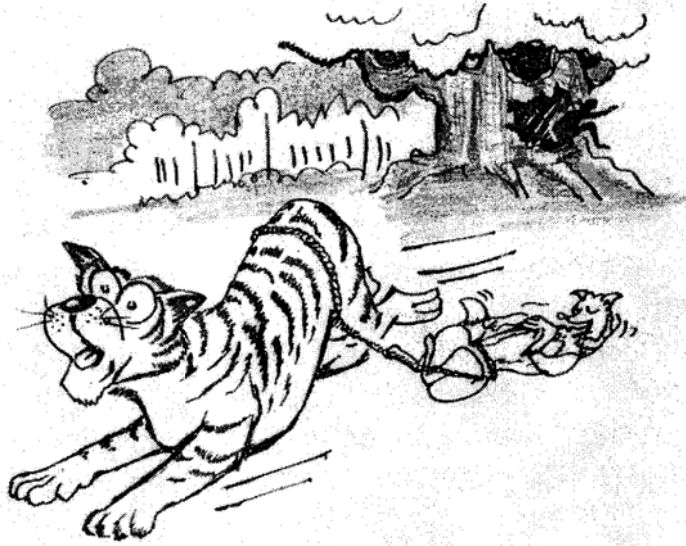
than an elephant, a tiger and all other creatures. But still the baby cried. And then it started to rain heavily.

In a stable near that house, a tiger was lurking to kill a horse. He could hear the mother trying to calm the baby. Then, at last the mother said, "Stop crying, or tapta will come." The baby stopped crying at once. The tiger wondered what this tapta was and how dreadful it was that the baby stopped crying at the mention of it. Suddenly he became very terrified;



what if tapta comes — he will kill me. Thinking this the tiger huddled himself in a corner of the stable.

In the darkness of the night, a thief also happened to sneak into the stable to steal a horse. He was checking the horses to find the best among them by holding their legs. As he was doing so, he caught hold of the tiger's leg. The thief thought that this horse must be a strong one. He couldn't see that it was actually a tiger. He put a saddle on the tiger and tightened the rein. The tiger thought that the thief was tapta. He was so terrified that he couldn't even move. The thief quickly jumped on the tiger and pulled the reins. The terrified tiger ran faster and faster with the thief on his back. As dawn was coming they approached a forest. In the faint morning rays the thief saw that he was not riding a horse but a tiger. His hairs stood on their ends. He thought that the tiger would surely eat him. He couldn't stop, nor get off. He just kept riding, waiting for a chance to escape. A little later he saw a tree with a big crevice. When the tiger came near it the thief jumped off the tiger and hid himself in the crevice. The tiger who was already terrified was so startled by the sudden jump of tapta that he ran twice as fast as before. After roaming some time, the tiger met a fox. He told the fox everything. The fox became curious to know what Tapta actually was. So both of them came back to see tapta. They tied each other around their waist with a single rope so that the other



wouldn't run away leaving behind the other. When they came near the tree where the thief was hiding, they walked slowly and quietly inside the tree, the thief tried to see if the tiger was still there. So he quickly put up his head from the crevice to peep. His head was seen by the tiger and the fox. They thought that it was tapta. With a huge leap the tiger started running. The small fox could not run as fast as the tiger, so he was being dragged by the waist as they were tied together. The fox was dragged through the thorns, bushes and stones that at last only his waist was left with the rope. So died the fox.

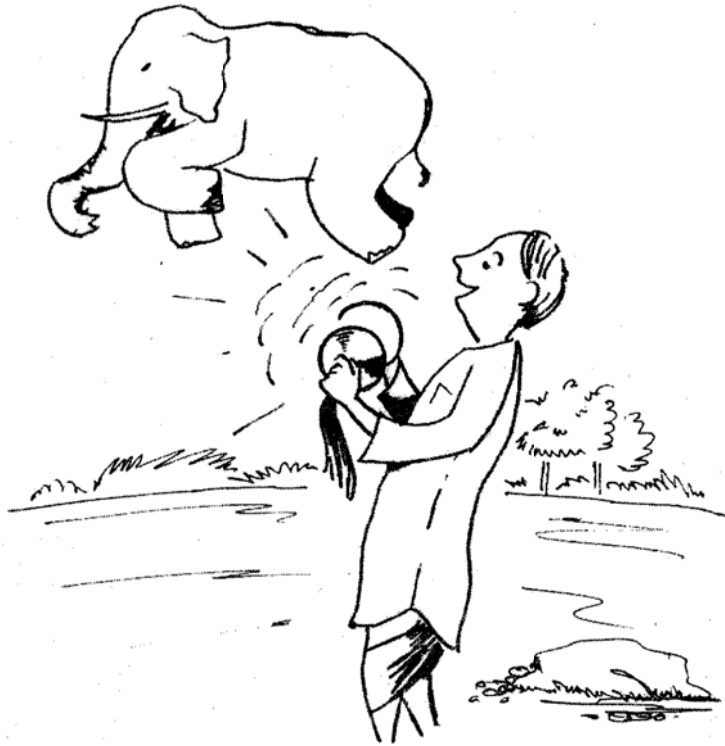
Curiosity is good, but it should not kill you.



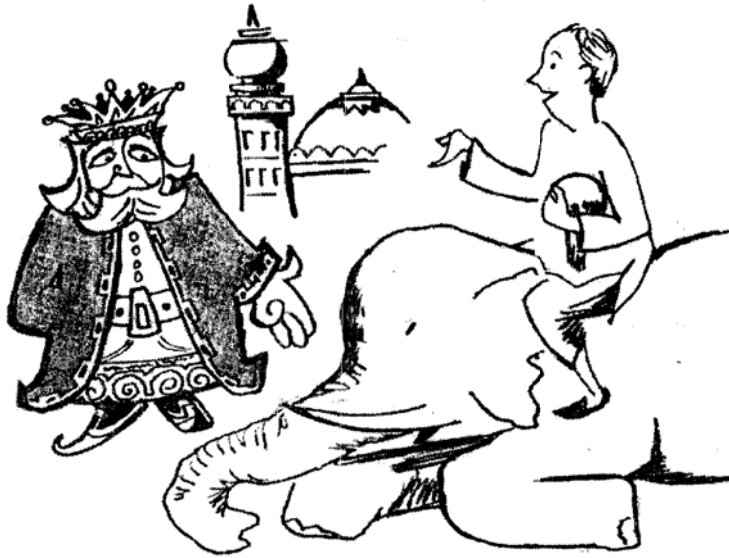
The flying elephant

A long time back, a proud elephant was killed by a swarm of wasps. Its corpse lay in the forest. Vultures ate away the inside of its belly so it became hollow.

One hot sunny day, as the vultures were eating inside the belly, the heat of the sun dried the skin of the elephant and it became hard. The flap of skin on the stomach turned it to leather and closed the opening. The vultures were trapped inside. A *pala* singer was incidentally coming in that direction. He saw the elephant lying on the ground. He wanted to see if the elephant was alive or dead. Slowly he came near the animal and struck his cymbal. The vultures were startled by the sound and they all flew up at once. The combined strength of the vultures took up the elephant for a moment into the air and fell down. The man was surprised, but he thought it to be interesting. He struck his cymbal four times. The elephant flew up a little higher and fell to the ground.



This time he climbed up on the elephant, sat on its back and kept striking the cymbal. The elephant flew as long as he struck the cymbal. An idea struck him. He thought that he could show the elephant to the foolish and greedy king of the land, and possibly sell it to him. With this plan he started striking the cymbal and came flying up to the palace.



At the palace he hovered round and round. Everybody came out to see the unusual sight. The king also came out to have a look at the flying elephant. When the man saw that the king was looking at him, he brought the elephant down on the ground. The king asked the man, "I want to buy your elephant. How much money do you want for it?" The man asked for many bags of gold and silver as the elephant's price. He gave the elephant and the cymbal to the king and went away with his treasure.

The king was very happy. He had the elephant decorated. A seat was put on its back on which he and his queen sat. He started playing the cymbal and the elephant flew up. As the elephant flew higher and higher the king became more and more proud. The elephant reached the clouds. The terrified queen held on to the arm of the king tightly. The moist air of the cloud was slowly softening the dried skin of the elephant. Gradually the skin of the belly opened. When the hole was big enough the vultures flew out of it one by one. When there was no vulture left in the elephant's belly, it began falling down. Faster and faster it came towards the earth with the helpless king and queen. When it struck the ground, they both died.



The Toad

It was a long time ago. In a village within a kingdom, there lived a woman with her son. But the thing was that her son was a toad. He was intelligent like a man and could talk.



One day the toad asked his mother, "Mother, I want to marry the princess. Please ask the king for her hand." His mother exclaimed in horror, "Don't say like that, my son. The king will never agree to marry his daughter to a toad." But the son insisted, "That he is a king doesn't mean he is everything. Just try, mother." Because of his repeated insistence,

the mother went to the palace. To the king she asked for the princess' hand for her son, the toad. At first the king thought



her to be mad. But seeing that she was serious about what she was saying, he scolded her and had her thrown out of the palace.

The toad was angry to know what happened to his mother. He told his mother, "Mother, go to the king once more. If he agrees, then all's well. Otherwise I will defeat him in battle and take the princess." She went to the king again and told him what her son had said. The king was so angry to hear the toad's threat from the woman that he had her beaten up by his men. Then she was thrown out of the palace. Seeing how his mother was treated by the king, the toad got ready for war. First he called two wild cats. The cats were big and had fur of grey and brown. They asked the toad, "Why have you called us, friend?" The toad told the two, "I am going

to battle against the king. I want you to help me in battle." "You have our word, friend. We will go to battle with you," reassured the cats. The toad then called all types of bees and wasps. He asked them also for help in the battle and they agreed.

The next morning the toad put all the bees and wasps inside a pipe. The two wild cats were pulling a chariot which the toad was riding. He rode the chariot up to the battlefield where the king and his army were waiting for him. The toad shouted to the king, "You are my elder, I beg you to start the battle." The king agreed to the toad's proposal. He then ordered his men to shoot poisoned arrows. Hundreds of bowmen shot at the same time and arrows fell like rain on the toad. Jumping down quickly from the chariot, he hid himself in a hole in the ground which was only the footprint of a cow. None of the arrows could hit him.

It was the toad's turn to attack. He took up the pipe and opened it to release the bees and wasps. The flying insects stung the king's army and they could not do anything. They ran away from the battle to save their lives.

The king was defeated. He called out to the toad, "You are the victor, my son. Let us stop fighting.



I am ready to give my daughter to you in marriage.”

Hearing the king, the toad called back the bees and wasps. The battle was over; the princess was married to the toad with great pomp and show. The toad and his mother lived happily like the king himself.

One should not be looked down because of one's size or poverty.



The shy husband

A newly married man was living in the house of his in-laws. The parents of his wife loved him a lot. He was kept like a pampered child.

An evening, his mother-in-law bought a big *sareng* for him. His wife cooked it nicely with all the tastiest ingredients added. The curry that she cooked was more than enough for them to be eaten in one meal, so she kept some of it for the next day. The food was served. The man sat with his in-laws and they started the dinner.

Besides being newly married, the man was living with his in-laws. This made him very shy. He couldn't even eat freely. "Why aren't you eating? Don't be shy. Take more," said the mother-in-law. He slowly replied, "I am not very, um, fond of big fishes..." And he kept fumbling his fingers and just waited for the others to finish eating. The mother-in-law was very sorry because she bought the big fish especially for him.

Dinner was over and the family had gone to bed. As it was nearing midnight, the man became hungry. He couldn't eat much as he felt shy in front of his in-laws. Now that he was hungry he remembered the curry in the pot that his wife had kept. When everybody was sleeping soundly he got up and went quietly into the kitchen. Slowly he opened the pot and ate all the curry. In order to make it look like a cat had eaten it, he licked the inside of the pot clean. At that very moment his mother-in-law woke up. She heard a slurping sound from the kitchen. "The cat is eating the fish," she said and came to the kitchen. But it was dark and she could hardly see. But the man heard her coming. Before he was caught, he tried to take his head out of the pot, but he couldn't. His head was stuck in it. He tried to go out of the kitchen before anybody saw him. As he was groping around, his head struck against a pillar and the pot broke leaving only the collar around his neck. Hearing the cracking sound, the mother-in-law thought that it was not a cat but a thief. She lit up a lamp and came in slowly into the kitchen and she saw a man fallen on the floor. The light fell on the man and she saw that it was her son-in-law looking at her sheepishly with a pot collar around his neck. "What happened, *ibungo*?" she



asked. He was very embarrassed. Without saying a word, he just ran away from the house and his feet knew no tiredness until he reached his home. The wife also woke up in the commotion in the kitchen. When

her mother told her what happened, she also felt sorry and said to herself, "How unfortunate I am that I have to lose my husband like this!"

The next morning the in-laws came to take the man. When he saw them coming from far, didn't have the face to face them. His parents were also surprised. Why did their son come back in the middle of the night and why didn't he want to meet his in-laws. At last his shame took the better of him. He left his house never to be seen again in his locality or by his family. His unfortunate wife remained a husband-less woman all her life.



The clever fox

A very hungry fox was roaming about in a forest looking for food. Long he walked and then he saw a dead elephant. How relieved he was — at last he got his food. He ran around the elephant with water in his mouth, thinking where to start eating. On the back side of the elephant, around the shoulder there was a wound where the flesh was exposed. The fox began his feast from there. In a few days he had eaten up the inside of the elephant. The inside was hollow and the rib cage was like a wall. He slept inside it, ate inside it: it was like his home with free meal.

One day the sun shone very hot. The skin dried and the entry was blocked. The fox was trapped inside the elephant. For hours and hours he jumped and rolled and howled inside the dark hollow of the elephant.

On the edge of the forest was a group of men coming into the forest. It was the king's soldiers

looking for this particular elephant of the king that was lost. When they saw the dead elephant one of them said, "That is the king's elephant — but it is dead." The fox heard people talking outside. Suddenly, he plan came to him on how to escape. When the soldiers were near the elephant's carcass, the fox spoke out loud from inside for them to hear, "Listen all ye king's men. I am the royal elephant. I died of a swelling on my back. I didn't want to die among people. So I came here to die. If you want me to become alive again, pour ghee into the wound on my neck."

The soldiers were frightened to no end. They immediately reported the incident to the king, who was both happy and astounded to hear the news of his lost elephant. He himself came to the forest with loads of ghee and oil. On reaching the place the ghee and oil were poured into the small hole on the elephant's back. Slowly the ghee



softened the dried skin of the elephant and the fox found his way to go out. The fox shouted, "Hear ye king's men. I am ready to get up. But you should all stand far from me, lest I should fall." Everybody walked back to a safe distance.

Knowing that it was his chance to escape, he darted out of the elephant's belly and before the king and his men could know what had happened he ran for his life. But soon the soldiers held their weapons tight and ran after the fox. Looking back the fox saw the men getting close to him. When he was



beginning to think that it was all over for him, he met a tiger. The tiger asked, "Why are you running so fast? Who is chasing you?" The fox replied, "They want me to marry the princess." "Why, then, I'll marry the princess if you don't like to," said the tiger happily. "Well, let's go then. Let me sit on your back," and the fox jumped on the tiger and sat on him. They turned back and came face to face with the soldiers.

The tiger announced, "Please stop all of you. I agree to what you say; I am ready to marry the princess." But these words only angered the soldiers more. They charged the two animals. Looking for an opportunity the fox jumped over the men and made good his escape, while the poor tiger fell to the hands of the soldiers.



Keibu Keioiba



Keibu Keioiba was a man who took human form during daytime and a tiger during night. He lived alone in a lonely hamlet a long time ago. Every night he went hunting for food in his tiger form.

One night his victim happened to be an old woman living alone in a small hut in the corner of a village. He woke her up and told her that he was going to eat her. She was terrified. "No," she cried, "do not eat me. I am old and thin and have no flesh on my bones. But there is a girl — young and beautiful. He name is Thabaton. She lives in that house at the end of the road of the village.

She has seven brothers, but they are away for their work to some far off place. You should eat her.” After hearing that Thabaton was very beautiful, Keibu Keioiba became very eager to see her.

Seeing that the beast was already thinking about Thabaton, the old woman said, “But there is one thing you should know. Her house has doors with seven hinges and you can’t break through them. In order to make her open the door you have to say this: ‘My sister, Thabaton. Open the door, we are back.’ And she will open the door.”

Keibu Keioiba came to Thabaton’s house and said “Sister Thabaton. Your seven brothers are back, open the door.” Thabaton answered from inside, “You don’t sound like my brothers, I can’t open the door.” Keibu Keioiba was dejected. He went back to the old woman and complained, “I couldn’t get Thabaton; so I have to eat you.” But the old woman had seen too many winters to give up so easily. “I’ll make her open it,” she said, “come with me.” On reaching Thabaton’s house she changed her voice and said, “Our dear sister Thabaton, back we are from our journey, and earned we have lots of money. Open the door and let us in.” It sounded like her brothers, so Thabaton opened the door with seven hinges. The moment she opened the door Keibu

Keioiba jumped on her and caught her. The old woman had already run away from that place before she opened the door. Keibu Keioiba took helpless Thabaton to his home.

When the seven brothers returned from their travel, they found the door of their house opened and there was no sign of Thabaton. They searched the whole house but couldn't find her. From the neighbours they came to know that she had been taken away by Keibu Keioiba. With angry lamentation they set out to find their sister with swords in their hands.

Keibu Keioiba had taken Thabaton to a small hut in the forest and kept her as his wife instead of eating her. He brought back food and made her cook everyday. Poor Thabaton, she had no way of escaping from the beast.

Months passed, but the seven brothers still kept looking for their sister. One day they saw her far off in the forest. They came to the hut and found her with a small child. They made a signal to her to make her know that they had come. The next morning, after Keibu Keioiba had left home, the brothers met their sister and they were overcome with joy. Then they made a plan for her to escape.

Later that day, when Keibu Keioiba returned home, he was given a pipe open on both ends by Thabaton. "Fetch some water for their is none left for cooking," said Thabaton. Away he went to fetch water.

The seven brothers who were hiding behind a bush came out, burnt his house, killed his son and escaped with Thabaton.



Meanwhile Keibu Keioiba was trying to fetch water. He filled the pipe and came up. But the pipe became empty again in a few moments. Again and again he tried, and every time the pipe became empty. A crow saw what was happening. The crow cawed, "Keibu Keioiba, hollow at both ends, and flown is your wife." As the crow kept saying this again and again, he thought that something was wrong. He threw away the pipe and ran home to find his hut burnt, his child killed and his wife gone. He cursed them and immediately set out for Thabaton.

The brothers knew that Keibu Keioiba would come looking for Thabaton. They armed themselves and remained alert all the time. Sometime later, Keibu Keioiba came. No sooner had he entered the gate, the brothers fell upon him like lightning and killed him.

Thabaton lived happily with her seven brothers always there to protect her.



The monkey and the bread

Once upon a time was an old woman who had two cats named Hawaiman and Thambalnu. They were a pampered lot, for the woman had no children or grandchildren. Everyday they were the first to be fed. Whenever she came back home from outside they snuggled around her for food.



One day she brought a piece of bread for the two cats. The cats were waiting for her in the verandah. When she saw them waiting, she took out the bread to be divided into two halves. But before she could do it Hawaiman jumped from behind her, snatched the bread and ran away. Thambalnu cried

'meaow, meaow' and ran after Hawaiman. As Hawaiman was approaching a stream Thambalnu jumped upon her and caught her by the neck. Thambalnu snarled angrily and said, "Why are you running with the bread? We are supposed to share it. Don't be greedy."

"I was just bringing it to share with you," replied Hawaiman meekly. "Let's sit here and divide," he said. And she took up the bread to divide when Thambalnu protested, "No, I'll divide it." Then they started quarrelling on who should divide the bread. At last Thambalnu said, "That's enough. We should stop quarrelling about everything. Let us find someone wise to divide it for us." Both of them agreed on this idea. They both held the bread with one hand each and began looking around for someone. Near the edge of the woods they found the leader of the monkeys sitting on the branch of a tree. He was old and clever. The cats called up to him saying, "*Ipu* monkey, we have a bread and we want you to divide it for us." Climbing down the tree the monkey said, "Alright, give it to me. I'll divide it equally into two parts for you." He brought out a balance which he held up high. He tore the bread into two unequal halves and placed them on the two plates of the balance. The bigger half was

clearly heavier. The monkey tore a large piece from the bigger half and ate it up. The two cats looked at each other in surprise but didn't say anything. Now the other half was heavier. He then tore a piece from it and ate it also. But then the other half became heavier again. In this way the monkey kept eating away from the heavier one every time until only two very small pieces were left. The hearts of the two cats sank. Almost nothing was left for them. One of them said, "*Ipu* monkey, what manner of dividing is that?" To this the monkey replied, "It is very difficult; I am trying to divide it equally. Now you have to pay me for my work." And quickly he gobbled up the remaining pieces of bread also. The two cats looked at the monkey with gaping mouths. They left



disheartened but wiser. They told each other, "We should not quarrel anymore. See what happened today."

Hawaiman
and Thambalnu never quarreled again after that day.



The Lazy Woman

Once upon a time there lived a man and his wife. They were poor. The man worked from morning till evening, but his wife was a very lazy woman.

The man kept silent all the time for he was a very patient man. But one day he scolded her, saying, "What is wrong with you? You won't work, you won't do a thing. Everybody works to earn whatever they can by farming or weaving or anything. How can you go on living like that?"

His wife replied, "You are talking as if I don't want to work at all. Just bring me some cotton and you'll know I also can do something."

So, the next day the man bought cotton and gave it to his wife. She started drawing threads out of the cotton. But no sooner had she finished one ball of yarn she became lazy again. She stopped spinning and whatever cotton was left was scattered

here and there — some used for cleaning, some blown away by wind. When her husband asked how many yarns she had spun, she just took out the only yarn from the *kharung* again and again and showed it to him as if there were more than one yarn. The unsuspecting husband was pleased with her work. “You have spun enough for one *khudei*,” he said.

But the wife wasn't pleased. She was now trapped. How could she make a *khudei* from only one yarn? She thought of a plan. When her husband had gone to collect firewood from the forest, she covered herself up in a ragged cloth from head to toe. On her face she pasted cotton balls soaked in sugar. She looked really dreadful in the get-up. She hid behind a tree near the road and waited for her husband.

When the sun was about to set the husband came back with a load of firewood on his head. As he approached the tree, his wife jumped in front of him and shrieked out, “I am the Goddess of Cotton. Do you want me to eat your wife or cotton yarn?” The man was terrified. The woman asked again, “Your wife or cotton yarn?” The man was getting his wits back slowly. He thought that the Goddess was asking him whether She should eat his wife or the cotton yarns that his wife had spun. Yarn could

be spun many times, but he wouldn't be able to make his wife again. So he said, "Eat the yarns and spare my wife."

The wife quickly came behind the tree and in the failing light of the twilight, ran back home. She changed her clothes and waited for her husband as if nothing had happened.



Meanwhile the man picked up his woods after he had regained his senses. When he reached home, he told his wife the whole incident. The shrewd wife replied, "What about your *khudei*? I really wanted to make one for you. The Goddess must have eaten all the yarn I have spun." They looked inside the pot but there was no yarn in it. Even that single yarn had been taken away by his wife, so he saw nothing.

The wife acted as if she was really sorry for the loss. Seeing her sadness, the husband said, "Don't worry about it. You are alive and that means you can spun more of them later."

So the cunning wife lived happily while the husband worked hard all his life.



Growing gold



Hundreds of years ago a king ruled over a land. One day he was trying a thief who was caught red-handed. At last he decided that the

thief be hanged in front of the public for his crime.

On the day of execution a huge crowd was gathered at the gallows. The thief was brought to the gallows and a noose was put around his neck. The executioner was waiting for the time. The king asked the thief, "You are going to be hanged till death for your crime. Do you have any last wish?" "My Lord," thief replied, "I do have a last wish. But I am afraid that I have to leave this world without fulfilling a work."

“What is that? Speak out,” demanded the king.

“Well, my Lord, I know how to grow gold. I wanted to do it for the prosperity of the king and the land. But, alas, it is all over.”



The king retorted in disbelief, “How could that be possible?”

“Why not, my Lord! I know the secret to it. The only thing is the time is near for me to be hanged...” and the thief showed a face full of remorse.

“Don’t worry about that. I am postponing it. Just tell me how to grow gold.”

“Then please listen carefully, my Lord,” the thief continued, “All the gold in the royal treasury must be brought out to be planted in the soil. The only thing is that the person to plant the gold should be someone who has not stolen anything in his life. If you select one such person from among your nobles and subjects and get the gold planted, there

will be gold growing on trees in your land.”

Believing the thief, the king began his search for a person who has never stolen in his or her life. First of all he called a noble who he believed was the most sincere person. The duty of planting gold was given to him. But, he started shivering with fear. He looked timidly at the king and said, “Forgive me, my king. I can’t plant the gold. Once I stole a gold chain belonging to the daughter of my neighbour.”

Next, the king called his trustworthy chief minister. He was also not ready to plant the gold. He said, “I am not worthy of this responsibility, sire. From time to time I take money from the royal treasury for my own use.”

Thus the king called all his nobles and ministers and even his relatives one by one — but none of them agreed to plant the gold. Each of them had stolen one thing or the other in their lifetime. At last the thief asked the king to plant the gold himself. The king said slowly, “I can’t do that. I also use the money of the people for myself, sometimes. I have also stolen, in one way.”

And so it was found that there was none in the kingdom who had not stolen at least once in their lifetime. There was nobody to plant the gold.



The king looked at the thief with a sigh. "Now you have to be hanged as the gold could not be planted." The thief asked, "Why should I be hanged?"

"For stealing. You were caught red-handed," said the king.

"No, my Lord! Please think of it. I am not the only thief around here. All are thieves. The difference is that I was caught red-handed, while everybody confessed. If thieves are to be killed, then all must be killed, including you, my king."

The king was speechless. If he killed the thief everybody else must also face the same fate, even himself. He told the thief not to steal again and let him free.



Pi-Thadoi

There was once a very clever man named Pi-Thadoi in a certain land. Sometimes he was very proud of himself for which the people didn't like him very much.

When, one day, as he was ploughing, some villagers threw stones at him. Luckily for him, the stones hit his bull. The bull wasn't that lucky as it died there and then. Seeing that they have killed the bull, the villagers fled immediately. What they wanted was to hurt Pi-Thadoi. The death of his bull made Pi-Thadoi very angry. He decided to teach them a lesson.

During the evening of that day, when darkness was falling all around, Pi-Thadoi took his dead bull on his bullock cart to a nearby Kabui village. He went to one house and he was about to call the head of the house when he saw a man entering the wooden trunk in the verandah. Clever as he was, he knew right away that it was a thief hiding in the trunk. He

came in quietly and locked the trunk. Then he called out to the head of the family, "Oh, *ipa*. I am Pi-Thadoi. I want to sell you a healthy bull. Please get up."

"Come tomorrow morning, it is late," came the reply from inside. But Pi-Thadoi said, "But my need is urgent. You don't need to come out, I'll bind the bull in your front-yard and I want the wooden trunk in your verandah as the price for it." The old Kabui replied, "That box! No problem, you can take it."

So Pi-Thadoi put the dead bull in the courtyard and took the trunk and went away putting it on his

cart. As he was driving the cart, the thief who was hiding in the trunk spoke up from inside, "Pi-Thadoi, my friend. You seem to be a good man.



Free me and I'll give you lots of gold and silver." Pi-Thadoi was happy to hear that. He opened the trunk and the thief came out. As promised, the thief gave Pi-Thadoi a bag filled with gold and silver and ran away. Pi-Thadoi took the treasure but he didn't go back home. Instead he traveled to distant lands for days and when he came back he brought back a beautiful wife.

His villagers were surprised. Those who tried to hurt him thought how could he have gotten so rich and came back with a beautiful wife. Their hatred for

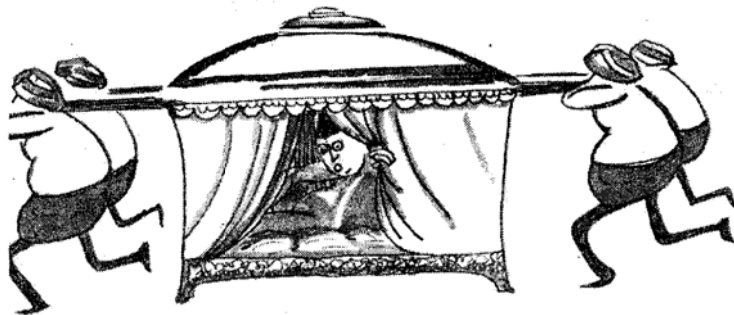


him became stronger. They decided that they have to kill him anyhow. So they came one evening when Pi-Thadoi and his wife were having dinner. Standing outside the door they threw stones at him like hail. But the stones hit his wife instead and she died.

Pi-Thadoi was deeply shocked. How could they have done this? He was just beginning to live happily with his wife. Nevertheless, he wasn't to be defeated so easily. He was a clever man. He thought

of a way to take his revenge. He took his dead wife to the village pond and placed her at the foot of a tree near the pond and made her sit up. He put some eatables in front of her so that it seemed like she was selling eatables. When it was done, Pi-Thadoi hid behind the tree.

When morning came, a rich merchant came along that way sitting on his palanquin carried by four men. Seeing a beautiful woman selling eatables, he asked his men to stop. He ordered one of his attendants to buy some food from that woman. The attendant came and asked the woman for some food, but there was no reply. Not even a slight movement was there. The man asked again and again, and when no reply came he returned and reported it to the merchant. So he came himself to the woman and asked her for some eatables. When she didn't give a response to him also, he shook the body of the



woman in a way of waking her. But the body fell in the water as she was already dead. At that moment Pi-Thadoi jumped out from behind the tree and started screaming, "He killed my wife, he pushed her into the water! Help, help!"

The merchant was overwhelmed by the sudden events. Frightened, he said, "My good fellow, I am extremely sorry. I don't know how it happened. Please do not make it public." And in order to keep it a secret he gave Pi-Thadoi a bagful of money.

Thus Pi-Thadoi became even richer. His enemies were angrier than ever. "What God has blessed this man," said they, "Every time we try to finish him, he becomes richer. Let's make sure we kill him this time." And so one night they entered the house of Pi-Thadoi, captured him and put him inside a sack. They kept him like that for the whole night. In the morning they were taking him to a river when they got tired and rested. So tired were they that they all fell asleep. A shepherd was coming along that way with his herd of sheep. Seeing a big sack he became curious and went to open it. As he was trying to open it, Pi-Thadoi shouted from inside, "No, I don't want to be minister. I can't, I can't." The surprised shepherd asked, "Who are you, and what are you saying?"

Pi-Thadoi said, "The king's men want me to be minister. When I refused, they caught me and are taking me to the king."

"I want to be a minister. Can I become one?" asked the shepherd.

"Then set me free — open this sack. You can take my place and they will take you for making you minister."

The foolish shepherd believed him and did as he was told. Pi-Thadoi let him take his place, and left him in the sack. And he went back home with the herd of sheep.

When the evil-minded villagers woke up, they took the sack up to the river. The shepherd shouted from inside, "I agree to become your minister." But the men laughed and said, "You are going to meet death and still you want to be a minister. Okay then, here is your ministership." Saying this, they threw the sack into the river. And that was the end of the poor shepherd.

On reaching the village, Pi-Thadoi's enemy found him alive. And not only that — he was river by a herd of sheep. Now they were really scared. They no longer thought of killing him. Instead they befriended him and tried to find out how he survived

all the attacks. They asked him how his journey was. Pi-Thadoi replied, "Oh. I met all our ancestors, they are living happily. The only thing is that they wanted to see all of you for once." His enemies believed what he said. They expressed their willingness to go. "Then you have to go the way I went," said Pi-Thadoi. They all agreed. The next day they came to the same place at the river with sacks of their own. They were all excited to go and meet their ancestors in the land of death. Pi-Thadoi told them not to stay long. One of them said, "I haven't finished my farm, I'll come back immediately."

Then Pi-Thadoi bound the mouths of the sacks and pushed them all into the river. And thus they got the punishment for their wrong doings.



Lai Khutshangbi

Once upon a certain time there was a certain village in a certain land. In one small house of the village lived a small family of a man, his wife and their small child.

Nearby the village, there was a thick forest where lived many demons and evil spirits. Among them was a demon with very long hands, for which she was given the name 'Lai Khutshangbi.' When she walked, her hands touched the ground. Her fingers were as sharp as thorns. She had a big mouth with a long tongue. She was a terrible sight to look at.



She used to come at late nights to the village, push her hand into holes in walls and catch people sleeping inside their houses and eat them. She had killed quite a number of people that way. The villagers were terrified enough not to go out of their homes after sunset.

But there was one house which Lai Khutshangbi dreaded to enter. It was the house of our man. Nonetheless, she never stopped looking for an opportunity.

One day the man had to leave his home for a few days to go on a work. The same night that he left, Lai Khutshangbi came to his house and, knocking on the door, she called, "Ho Leirikma, is *itei* home?" Leirik's mother knew that a woman who called at such a late hour could only be Lai Khutshangbi. The mother and the child held on to each other in fear. If she replied that he was not home, the demon would certainly come inside and eat them. It was Leirik's father that she was afraid of. So Leirikma replied in a fearless tone, "Yes, he is home." Hearing this, Lai Khutshangbi ran away. That night Leirik and her mother could save their lives. The following night also the same thing happened. This went on for few days until Leirikpa returned from his work. When he was told of what happened when he was away he was furious. That night he waited for Lai Khutshangbi with a sword. It was after midnight. They could hear movements outside. It was her. She quietly knocked the door and asked, "Leirikma, is *itei* home?" Leirikma slowly answered,



“No, he is away.”

“Now you’ll see,” said the demon and pushed her hand through a hole in the wall. Leirikpa, who was already waiting by the hole with a sword, cut off her hand.

Lai Khutshangbi cried in pain:

“Ayo ema, I’m dead

Ayo yo ema ayo yo

Leimadeng deng Ningjaobi

You a big liar

Ayo yo ema ayoyo.”

And she ran away dragging her other hand. The blood coming out of her arm smeared the leaves and grasses on her way. It is said that the red patches that are still seen on some grasses and bushes is her blood. Her severed hand fell in Leirik's house. Leirikpa followed Lai Khutshangbi through her blood trails. The demon could only run so far when Leirikpa caught up on her and stepped on her other hand. Then he cut off that arm also and let her go.

From that day Lai Khutshangbi never returned to the village. The villagers thanked Leirikpa for his bravery. They could sleep peacefully at night from that day onward.



Boonam Hill



Dangleiba was a king who ruled in the kingdom of Moirang a long time ago. He had two wives. The first wife bore him a son named Yanguba, and the second, Yangheiba. The second wife died soon after she gave birth to her son, so the king loved Yangheiba more than anybody else. This made the first wife and her son jealous. They were afraid that the king

might even make Yangheiba his successor. They, therefore, started looking for ways to get rid of the younger son.

One day Yanguba's mother called the two princes and said, "Listen carefully, Yanguba and Yangheiba. I am getting old and my days are numbered. I want you two to make a coffin for me. Go to the woods and cut a tree that grows overhanging a cliff. Use that tree to make my coffin." Yangheiba didn't know the evil intentions of his step-mother and brother. So he agreed.



The two princes went to the forest and climbed a hill. There they found a tree that grew the way their mother described. As they were cutting the tree, Yanguba said, "The tree is about to fall. Why don't you support it from below, for it might fall deep down into the valley?" But Yangheiba said, "I could be crushed by the falling tree, my brother. Why don't you do it, I'll cut the tree." After quarrelling over it for sometime, Yanguba realised that it was useless to argue. So he just let the tree fall on the steep slope. They could pull it up with some difficulty. But at last they were able to make a coffin out of it. Yanguba was disappointed at the failure of their plan to kill Yangheiba. When the coffin was finished, Yanguba thought of another plan. "You're the same height as mother. Why don't you go inside the coffin to see if it fits?" said Yanguba. Yangheiba was beginning to suspect the true intentions of his step-brother. "I'm still a young boy. I haven't seen any dead person and I don't know how they lay inside a coffin, my brother. You show it to me first and I'll do it," replied he. Yanguba was caught in his own trap. He had to do it. As soon as he lay down in the coffin to show how it was done, Yangheiba covered the coffin and fastened the four corners with nails. He pushed the coffin into the river. Yanguba was

going to die the death he intended for his step-brother. He called out from inside, "Yangheiba, my brother. My mother and I tried to kill you, but I am paying the price for our sins. I have no regrets. But will you let me have my flute." Yangheiba pushed the flute inside and then let the coffin be carried away by the current.

The current took the coffin till the edge of Ithai. All the while, Yanguba was playing his flute inside the coffin. It was heard by Kumjarembi, daughter of Ithai king Kairemba. She wondered where such melancholic music be coming from. It sounded so near, yet so low. Looking around she came to see the coffin floating along the river current. She knew that the enchanting music was coming from inside the coffin. She walked through the water and pulled it ashore. When she opened it she was surprised to see a living person inside it playing a flute. Yanguba told her how he came to such a situation. She also told him who she was.

For some days he stayed near the river and she came to meet him everyday. Gradually, love developed between the two. Their relation could not be kept secret for long. When people started talking about it, King Kairemba felt humiliated. So he asked

his daughter, "My dear child, why do you go to the river bank everyday with food and water?" "Oh, it is just a sick stray dog. I couldn't help seeing it yelping in pain and hunger," replied Kumjarembi. But her reply could not clear her father's suspicion.

King Kairemba wanted to know the truth. So, one day he left home saying he was going to Kege Moirang. But, instead, he hid somewhere and waited to see where his daughter went. Kumjarembi, thinking that her father was gone, brought Yanguba to her house. Her father came rushing into the room in rage. Yanguba had no time to run, so he hid himself behind a *paya* bunch. Kairemba knew where he was hiding. In one sweep stroke he cut the *paya* bunch along with the head of Yanguba.

What a sad day it was for Kumjarembi. Her sorrow was more for she was carrying Yanguba's child in her womb.

Months passed and she gave birth to a son. She named him Yangoi Yangba Saraba. The coming of her son lessened her sorrow to some extent. She diverted her mind in raising her son. When the boy was old enough to understand the world, she told her how his father was killed. She warned him, "Your grandfather didn't like your father. So, by all means

he won't like you either. You should stay away from your grandfather." He could never forget his mother's words. He put it in his heart to avenge his father.

Day by day Yangoi Yangba Saraba grew and became a strong young lad. His mother was proud of him. One day his grandfather asked him to come fishing. They came to the river and started fishing. The grandfather cast his net into a deep part of the river. He kept pulling it for sometime before he called

out to his grandson, "My boy, it seems the net is stuck. Can you dive under the water and free it?" The boy believed the old man and dived. But the net was not stuck anywhere. He knew that he was being tricked by the old man. When he came up the water he saw the old man waiting for him with a *long*



in hand. Knowing what was about to happen he dived again and came up at a farther place. The grandfather was disappointed. He tried again, "Come on, my boy, dive again and free the net." But the boy was prepared this time. He said, "I can't do it, grandfather. I am too young for it." The old man had no option but to go under the water himself to prove that he was not lying. He dived into the water and when he came up Yangoi killed him with the *long*. This place where grandson killed his grandfather was arched by a hill which came to be known as Poonam Hill.

At Kege Moirang, Yangheiba ruled as a king for many years. When he was old, he gave the throne to Yangoi Yangba Saraba, the son of his brother.

It is said '*Micha sisanu khallaga icha si.*'
You get what you give.



The Devil Without Jaws



Once there was a man who was very hard-working. He did all he could to earn his living. He planted vegetables in

his garden, he worked in the fields, and he even went to the forest to collect firewood. He knew no rest. He was, as they say, as busy as a bee.

On the other hand, his wife was an easy-going, lazy woman. She never worked. The only thing she did was to eat what her husband brought. She always gave one reason or the other not to work. But she never got tired of eating. Whatever her husband brought, she ate the best and gave the leftover to him. But the man never complained.

The wife was not only a glutton, but a big liar. Once she ate all the good fish her husband brought and then she told him that they were eaten by a devil who had no jaws. The man exclaimed in disbelief, "What! I worked so hard and bought some fish, but I am not to see them nor taste them. What bad luck! Well who else could have eaten except the devil-without-jaws?" The wife didn't get the mockery in his words. Instead she kept on saying, "This devil is a shameless one. She goes from house to house stealing and eating good food. Why, the other day she stole from aunt Leirik's kitchen." The man simply



remarked, "Oh, she went there too. Well, well!" and went to work without further delay. Nonetheless, he wanted to teach the 'devil' a lesson.

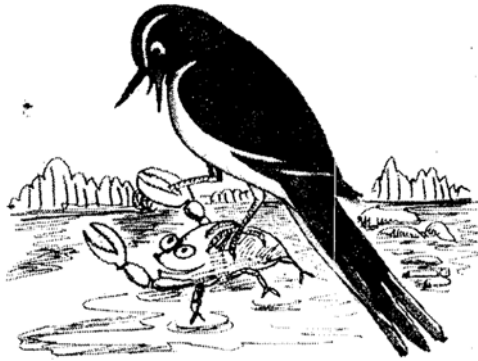
Few days passed and an opportunity came to him. It was early in the morning when he told his wife that he was going for a day's journey, and that he might not come back for the night. The wife was very happy to hear that. She pretended to be very obedient and prepared his food in no time. "You might be late, so I'll just cook *chamthong* with some vegetables from the garden," she said. The man was unflattered, "Of course, I am not choosy for that matter."

While he was taking a bath the food was done. When he sat down to eat he found that the curry was uneatable. It was just plain water where all the vegetables were floating. It was not properly cooked. He was very angry. He ate only a mouthful and got up pretending to be in haste. As he was packing his clothes, she was busy preparing her own food. The man shouted, "I am going, woman." She didn't even come out to see him off. This gave the man the chance to sneak back to the house and into the kitchen. Hiding in the corner of the kitchen he watched whatever his wife was doing. She was cooking a nice dish for herself with fish and peas and all the

good food that she had kept hidden from her husband. When the dish was cooked she served them and sat down comfortably to eat. Her gluttony was visible from the way she ate — she ate in such haste that the food that fell down was more than the food that went into her mouth. It was a mess. As soon as she had finished eating, the husband jumped out and shouted, “Ha! Today I’ve caught the ‘devil without jaws’!” The startled wife could only say “*Heima!*” She was so embarrassed that she left the house instantly and never came back.



Khambraangchak



Once upon a time, on a tree in a forest, lived Khambraangchak Tonsenu. She was a bird. She loved to be always neat and tidy. She would wash her plumes often

and apply make-up on her face.

One day she was getting ready to visit her parents. She wanted to wash her feet, so she went to the river. Wanting to scrub her legs she looked for a nice rounded stone. She picked one from the bank and put her feet on it. But it was not a stone — it was a crab. Unfortunately for the crab it was the second time that somebody had stepped on him.

Earlier, a pair of cows from a brahmin family had stepped on him while they were crossing the river. A second time was unbearable. So he bit the foot of Khambraangchak. Khambraangchak didn't know what happened but she was so startled by the pain that she flew up and sat on a tree branch. The sudden perching shook the branch and a fruit dropped down from it. The fruit hit the head of an ant. The ant ran around in pain until he came to a pig and bit its belly button. The pig jumped and fell on a banana tree. The tree, unable to bear the pig's weight, fell down on a fence, and the fence broke and fell into a pond. The pond became very angry. He roared, "You insolent monkeys! How dare you fall on me? You'll pay for it. I am complaining to the king."

The complaint was made. The king began an interrogation. First of all the fence clarified: "My Lord, I am innocent. I fell because the pig leaned on me." The pig also had his answer ready: "My Lord, I was in terrible pain. I didn't know what I was doing because the ant bit me." The ant came forth



and said, "My king, I only bit him to bear the pain of the fruit that fell on my head." But the fruit plant also pleaded innocence: "My Lord, I fell because Khambraangchaak



shook my branch." Khambraangchak gave her words slowly and gracefully, "My king, I was bitten by the crab. I was startled by the pain. Maybe I shook the branch, you know." At last the king asked the crab, "Why did you bit Khambraangchak?" The crab spoke fast, "My Lord. Kk kk... What was I to do? First the brahmin's c-c-cows stepped on me, then K-K-Khambraangchak stepped on me while she was washing. I bit her because I was in pain."

After hearing all the witnesses, the king called upon the brahmin couple. Then he gave his judgement, "The root cause of the whole incident is you two. You should have kept your cows bound and not loose. From now on you should keep them bound."

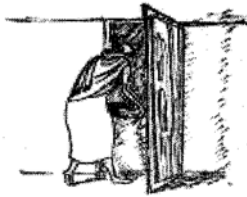
And so the case was solved.



Ita Thaomei

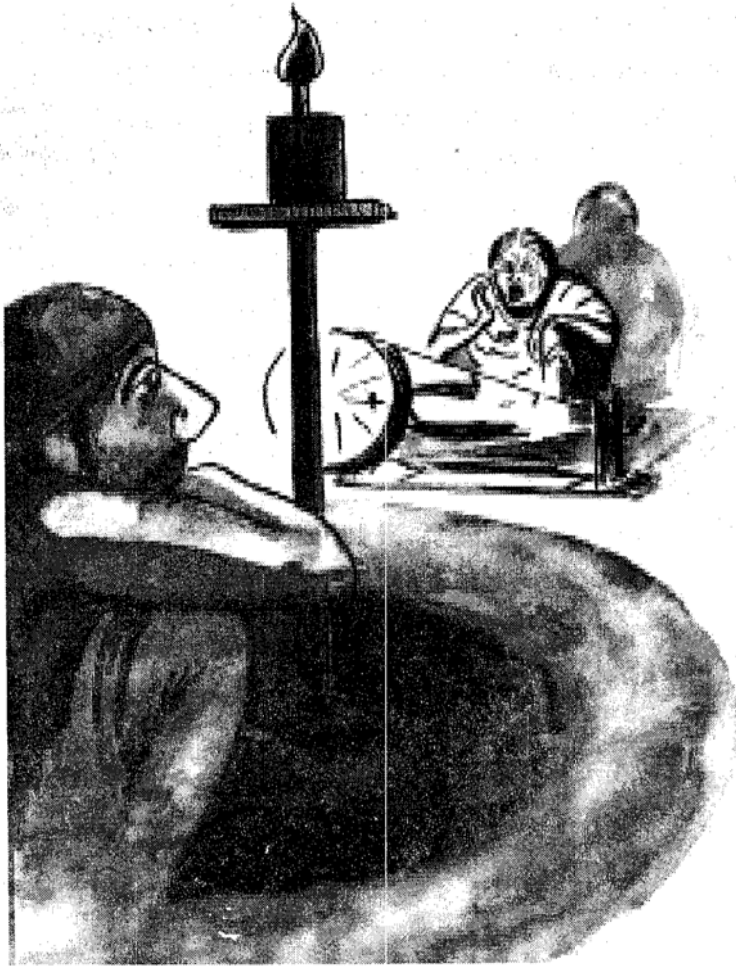
A long time ago an old widow lived alone in a house. She was very meticulous in her habits. But most importantly she was very hardworking. During the day she weaved and during the night she spun yarn. She was quite well-to-do in her town because of her hard-work. Her riches made the thieves to have an eye on her house.

One evening, the old lady opened her back door to throw away some rubbish. During that small



interval of time a thief sneaked into the room and hid himself in the shadow of a lamp. He stayed there until the old lady had cooked and

eaten her dinner. Then as usual she sat down to spun yarn, when she saw the thief near the lamp. She got so frightened that she could neither shout nor sit still. But she was very wise. She calmed herself down



and went on with her work while all the time she was thinking what to do. Soon she got an idea. She looked towards the lamp and called, "*Ita Thaomei, ita Thaomei.*" Lifeless as it was, the lamp didn't give a reply. The old lady spoke in a sad tone, "Why aren't you talking to me tonight, *ita?*" The thief was amazed to hear the old lady. He thought, "It seems the lamp talks to her everyday. Maybe she is not answering because of me. I will answer then." The old lady called again, "*Ita Thaomei.*" "*Hao,*" answered the thief in a pitched voice. "I'll tell you a story tonight," she continued, "Once there was a widow who lived all by herself. One night a thief came to her house. The frightened widow shouted 'thief, thief.'" The old lady was telling a story but she shouted the words 'thief, thief' so loud that the neighbours heard her and came to her house and caught the thief.

Wisdom is a virtue. The old lady could save herself because of her wisdom.



Chandrakangnaan



Chandrakangnaan was a lazy and easy-going person. He was the only son of a widow. He always wanted to wear good clothes and eat good foods, but he didn't like working.

Being old enough to marry, he asked his mother one day to ask the hand of Ngangbiton, the daughter of Keiroi Lakpa, a rich man. She went and humbly asked the hand of Keiroi Lakpa's daughter in marriage. Hearing the proposal, Keiroi Lakpa flared

up, "I'll never give my daughter to your good-for-nothing lazy son." Embarrassed, she returned home. But Chandrakangnaan wasn't disappointed. However lazy he was, he didn't like to be looked down. He knew one thing — he had to marry Ngangbiton.

There was a hockey match at the royal ground. The King's players and the Prime Minister's players were playing. Chandrakangnaan was also watching the match. As the game progressed, he walked right through the field and stood near the king's players' camp. There he uttered something to himself but it was loud enough for those near him to hear it. He said, "The king's players are hopeless. How can they win if they play like this? They don't have players like me." In fact the king's team was losing. So the king's men who heard Chandrakangnaan felt embarrassed. After saying his words Chandrakangnaan went back again right through the field. This time the king noticed him and asked, "Who is that man walking in the field?" Those who heard Chandrakangnaan, reported it to the king. The king sent for Chandrakangnaan. When he came, the king asked him, "My men tell me that you declare yourself to be a good hockey player. Is it true?" "Yes, sir," answered Chandrakangnaan, "If you will allow me, I can score goals after goals."

“What is your name?”

“I am called Ibaingang, sir.”

“Where do you live?”

“Sir, I am staying at Keiroi Lakpa’s.”

“Is it? Then how am I not aware of it?”

“Sir, I... Ngangbiton...,” stammered Chandrakangnaan.

The king asked no more for he had come to the conclusion that Ibaingang was Keiroi Lakpa’s son-in-law.



“Well then, Ibaingang. From tomorrow you shall play in my team. I will send my men to pick you. Come to the palace without fail,” ordered the king.

That evening Chandrakangnaan went to Keiroi Lakpa’s house and remained hidden in the garden.

Ngangbiton opened the door of her room and came out to check if she had left anything outside before she slept. Meanwhile Chandrakangnaan quietly entered her room and crawled under her bed. He wasn't able to sleep the whole night. In the morning, Ngangbiton was cleaning her room when he climbed into her bed and slept under the blanket. After sometime the king's men came with a palanquin. They said, "We are here for Ibaingang, if he is ready." Keiroi was taken aback. He and his wife were looking at each other silently, both of them thinking that the other had been keeping a husband for Ngangbiton secretly. When they checked their daughter's room they found Chandrakangnaan sleeping in her bed. Getting more and more surprised by the events, the parents asked their daughter how a man was staying in her room. But Ngangbiton was more than surprised — she was dumbfounded from fear and shame. She couldn't say a word. Her parents thought that she might have kept him there and that they must be in love. Keiroi Lakpa and his wife accepted the situation as calmly as possible. Keiroi Lakpa looked at Chandrakangnaan and said, "Son, the king has sent for you. Go and do your service." Everyone went along as if nothing was wrong, although they were none the wiser of what was going on, except



Chandrakangnaan.

That day the extreme happiness helped by a load of luck made Chandrakangnaan to play such hockey that he single-handedly won the game for the king's team. The king was very pleased because his team was winning after a long time. He gave many gifts to

Chandrakangnaan and arranged a big wedding ceremony for him and Ngangbiton.

Chandrakangnaan could live happily because of his wit and courage.



Shampha

(The beautiful-haired girl)



Once there was a beautiful girl with a long and very beautiful hair. She had such long beautiful hair that nobody called her the name that was given by her parents. Instead she was called “Shampha”, which meant ‘the girl with the beautiful hair’.

Years passed by and Shampha became a grown-up girl. Every other day people came to her house asking her hand in marriage. Her parents in fact had a boy in their mind for her. They also fell in love with each other.

One day when Shampha was bathing in the river one strand of her hair fell into the river. By the will of God it was eaten by a fish. The hair was so long that it filled the stomach of the fish. It could not be digested, nor could it be vomited. The fish could not swim anymore and was swept away by the current. A little further downstream, it so happened that the king of that land and his subjects were coming for their bath. When the king saw the live fish being swept down by the current, he asked his subjects to catch it. In order to know why it couldn't swim they cut open its stomach and found a very very long hair, so long and beautiful that it filled a bowl. Everybody, including the king was surprised. He thought that if the hair was so beautiful, how beautiful would the person whose hair it was. So, the king ordered to search for the person to whom that hair belonged.

Some of the king's men reached the village of Shampha. But having heard the news beforehand, Shampha stayed in her house and didn't come out at all. The men called out every girl and every woman with long hair and compared the length. Unable to find, the men returned. But one couldn't possibly stop everybody from talking. The men heard about Shampha, the girl with a very long and beautiful hair.

They came back again to the village looking for her. As it was the king's order she had to come out. They saw her hairs and the one they had and were certain that it was her. They were also very much enchanted by her beauty. When they reported this to the king, he came immediately to see her. He too was enchanted by her beauty. Before he returned, he said that he would come back to take her. However the villagers were not happy. They were ready to fight with the king's men.

Some days passed. Nobody came to take Shampha. The villagers became relaxed and returned to their normal life. When everybody was unprepared, the king's sent his soldiers and the villagers couldn't fight as they were taken by surprised.

So the soldiers easily took away Shampha. Shampha couldn't do anything, except crying. Her man was also alone and helpless in front of so many soldiers. The separation from his love broke his heart. He plucked some flowers and ran after her to give the last gift. He met her at the village gate. The soldiers stopped him there. Helpless he sang:

Oh! My love!

Your beautiful hair,

Turned enemy they have.

Because of them
Caught you the king has
Before we part
Take this last gift.

Let me put them on your hairs.

She heard him but was helpless.

She replied:

Oh! My love!
Because of my hairs



The king has captured me.

No power do I have

To take your flowers.

Thus separated they were. Shampha was made one of the king's wives. One year had passed. She gave birth to a boy. The love of her son slowly made her forget her man. The king was also no more very watchful of her activities. She could now go wherever she wanted.

One day in the market, she met her lover. They were so happy, they cried together. At that moment they decided that they would run away to a far off land. They both agreed to the plan but the man was not ready to take the boy along. He said, "He is not my son, lets leave him." Shampha was saddened by this. She said, "He is not your son but he mine. I can't leave him." "You can't leave him and I can't go with him. That means I'll go alone." Saying this he left. Shampha also returned with her son to the palace. So, parted were they forever.



Marengthei



Once there lived in Nungbi village a very brave and strong man. His name was Marengthei. He was very skillful with arms and strong in the battlefield

although he was of a short stature. His strength brought many a neighbouring villages under the rule of Nungbi. He would bring the heads of his enemies and gave them to his king. The king showed his happiness with a big feast. Everybody sang and danced to his praise. Everyday the story of his fame spread far and wide. At the same time, the number of his enemies also grew.

A big and famous festival was held every year at the village of Paoyee. People were invited from villages near and far. Many forms of sports and games were held during the festival along with the joyous song and dance. The festival was called Paoyee Langji.

The people of Nungbi were also among those who attended the festival, and among those from Nungbi, Mareengthei was one. That year the famous strong man, called Kapang, from the village of Ngari also came. He was strong, brave and tall. However, he was not as clever as he was strong. Nonetheless, he was regarded as one strong man. He had also heard about Mareengthei, and so he wanted to test their strength in the game of *mukna*. He saw Mareengthei at the festival of Paoyee. Seeing that Maringthei was not as big as himself, he was sure of his victory. All the people in the festival liked the idea of a *mukna* between the two. Mareengthei also agreed without any fear. The festival was going to be quite a different one from the previous years. All the people of Ngari were supporting Kapang. They wanted to defeat Mareengthei at least once. Never wanting to be defeated, the people from Nungbi stood for Mareengthei. The match of *mukna* began. When together, Mareengthei was quite smaller than Kapang,

but the former had more brains than the latter. Kapang tried as hard as he could, but Marengthei won easily. Kapang was not happy; he still thought that he could win. He challenged again and Marengthei won again. Kapang was frustrated even more. With all his strength, he fell every time. If one was put down twice, the match was over. But Kapang was not satisfied and challenged for the third time. He played with all his strength but when they fell Marengthei was on top. This time the spectators didn't agree to



a fourth rematch. They said that the match was already over when he was defeated twice. Still he was given a third chance in which he failed again. So they declared Marengthei the winner.

Kapang was furious. He still wanted to defeat Marengthei in one way or another. So he challenged in him to a match of spear throw. This was now a matter of life and death. Marengthei said, "I will agree to this match' but you must call your villagers and your host in this village, and I will call my villagers and my host in this village. Let all of them know that the winner will take from the loser a buffalo having horns two hands in length. If everybody agrees, then we will have this match." Kapang found nothing wrong with this idea, so he agreed. The hosts also agreed. Both sides brought out one buffalo each with horns two hands in length. The winner was to take both buffaloes. As they were discussing who was to throw the spear first, Kapang said he would. Marengthei let him do it without any hesitation. The two of them stood at opposite ends of the play-field holding spears and shields. Marengthei held the shield in front of him and looked carefully at the spear that Kapang was going to throw at him. Being a strong man, Kapang threw the spear hard and straight towards his opponent. The spear pierced

through Mareengthei's shield but he caught it before it hit him. As his spear could not hit Mareengthei, Kapang was beginning to get frightened. Mareengthei shouted at him, "Be ready, Kapang, to meet your end. You are not going back alive. Say goodbye to your friends and relatives." The terrified Kapang couldn't stand his ground. Mareengthei said again, "You have to stand, Kapang. You have thrown your spear. Moreover you are the one who challenged. If you run away our people will become enemies for a long time. There will be fighting with lot of deaths. It is better that only two of us fight today and finish it now." But Kapang had already run away. Mareengthei and his people became very angry. The hosts and the chief of Paoyee came to Mareengthei and told him that since Kapang had run away, he was the winner and he could take both the buffaloes. But Mareengthei told the people of Ngari that he wanted a fight. He said that he would put a *heimang* branch in his farm and would wait for Kapang. He could come anytime and fight him. Kapang could also do the same and wait for him at his own farm. And if he didn't do that, Mareengthei warned that there would be war between the two villages.

As said, Mareengthei waited alone for Kapang in his farm. Kapang also set out from his house along

with his villagers to be able to capture Mareengthei. On their way they climbed the highest mountain peak of Nungbi called Sharal. They saw the vast crop fields of Nungbi, and also saw the *heimang* branch stuck to the ground in Mareengthei's farm. They thought that the place was too far, so they returned. When they were still at the top of the mountain, Kapang happened to put down his food packet on the ground for sometime. But there was an animal trap and the packet got caught in it. As he tried to pull it, pieces of it remained behind. The people of Nungbi saw this afterwards and came to know that Kapang came but never reached Nungbi for the duel.

Next day Mareengthei came to Kapang's farm along with his friend Luyen. When Kapang saw them coming, he went down to the river and disappeared. Mareengthei couldn't find him at his farm or his house. Everyday Kapang stayed at his farm-house and he would stay in his farm-house, but when evening came he went down to the river and disappeared. This went on for two-three days. What Kapang was actually doing was that he dug under a very big rock on the river bank and stayed the whole night in the hole. The river flowed so close to the rock that nobody ever suspected anybody could be hiding under that rock during the night. Kapang

snored loudly when he slept, but nothing could be heard due to the sound of the water. Mareengthei was very clever. He believed that Kapang must be hiding somewhere near the river. He observed that the only place where a man could hide was the big rock. He diverted the water flowing near the rock. Meanwhile Kapang was fast asleep under the rock. As the water was diverted his snoring could be heard outside. Mareengthei saw him sleeping under the rock towards the higher side of the slope. He caught the long hair of Kapang and pulled him, saying, "*Itao*, I've come." Kapang was startled. He tried to escape. Mareengthei said, "You cannot run anymore, *itao*. I am not here alone." Kapang couldn't do anything. Mareengthei took out the eyes of Kapang and brought him to his village. The villagers were happy to see Kapang captured. They held a party and sang and danced the whole night. The eyeless Kapang was made to dance in front of all. Then two large dogs were let loose to attack Kapang. At last he was killed and beheaded. His head was offered to the village chief. In this way Mareengthei got another great victory.

One day when Mareengthei came to the farm of Kapang, he heard the sister of Kapang singing. The song went thus:

Nungpi Mareengthei
Sha rai kayakh lei
Ngala nao kayakh lei
Ishi shai koral
Napangshin shaye
Imeerin charal makaan mana.

It meant somewhat near to:

Mareengthei of Nungpi
How many animals you have won
How many women you have won
How many men you have won.
You killed my family,
My tears are unstoppable.

(The song praises the strength of Mareengthei. He hunted animals, killed many men and looted many women. After he killed Kapang, the latter's family was left in despair. Kapang's sister sang all these in her song. This song is still sung by the elders in Nungbi.)

After hearing the song Mareengthei said,

“Young girl, I like your song. Sing that again for me.” She sang it again and again. He then said, “Young girl, your song is beautiful. You should teach this song to every person from your village and mine. Otherwise I will kill you too.”

The girl replied, “If you really want, then not only your village, but I will reach this song to all the nearby villages.” So she went to every village and taught the song to everybody. The song became very popular which is still sung today.

Many years later the Paoyee Langjin festival came as usual. And like every year Marengthei went for the festival along with his people. The grandson of Kapang was also a fully grown boy. He too came to the festival. He was also a clever, strong and willful. He had long kept a secret desire to avenge his grandfather. But it was impossible for a boy like him to defeat Marengthei in a duel. During the festival the people of Paoyee showed him Marengthei. From that moment he started making plans for his avenge. The plan that he made was to learn all the art of fighting from Marengthei himself to be used against him.

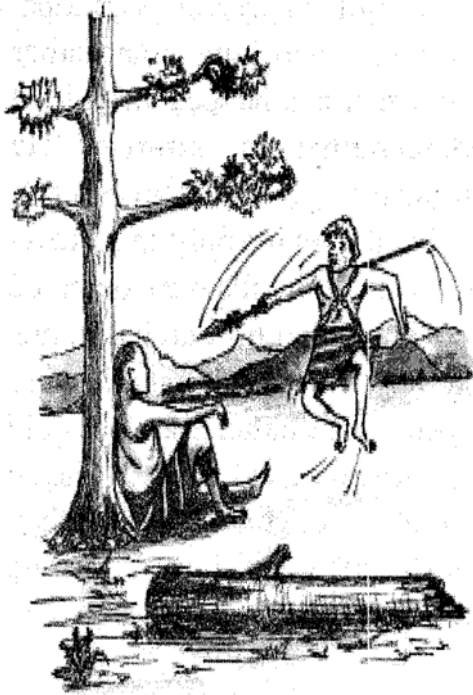
After the end of the festival, his people had returned, but the boy remained behind in Paoyee

without telling anybody. He approached Mareengthei and lied to him and said, "Grandpa, I have nobody in the world. Please take me to your village. I'll herd your cattle and work in your farm. I've no home, no farm and no parents." Mareengthei fell sorry for the boy. He said he would take him and he could work in his farm. The boy was happy. On their way to Nungbi, the boy said, "Grandpa, I heard you are very skillful in war and martial arts. Will you teach me some on our way?"

Mareengthei said smiling, "Will you be able to learn?"

The boy replied, "Yes, I can, grandpa. If I learn them, then I can herd the cattle alone and hunt animals in the hills." Mareengthei thought that it was not a bad idea. So he taught him the steps of spear fight that nobody else knew. The boy tried to learn as much as possible in the short time. He repeated the same steps and asked whether he was doing it right. The older man encouraged him for learning so fast.

When they were halfway through to Nungbi, the boy had learnt all the secret art of Mareengthei. His strong resolve had made him learn everything very soon. He had already learnt many other arts of fighting so that he was no less than his peers. When



they reached the rest house on their way, they sat down to have some rest. As they were resting, the boy asked, "I've learnt the steps. But I don't have a spear to practice. Can I use your spear once while you are resting?"

Marengthei denied the boy saying he would get his spear later. The boy kept insisting. Marengthei ensured him that he would give him a new one when they reached his village, but not his spear. Still the boy didn't agree. At last Marengthei gave up. He gave his spear to the boy and said that he could use it just for two steps only. Happily the boy practised two steps and asked if he was doing it right. As Marengthei was sitting and watching him practice, the boy thought that this was the right time to kill him. Suddenly, he

jumped in front of Mareengthei and said, "Grandpa, today is your last day. I will avenge my grandfather Kapang by killing you with the same spear that killed my grandfather." Mareengthei was surprised. He regretted being so foolish to give away his secrets to a stranger and also hand over his only spear to an enemy. His shrewdness and his skills were defeated by this young boy. He knew that his end has come, so he said, "Ok, my boy. That is the same spear with which I killed your grandfather. I am now old and it is good that you are going to kill me." And so Kapang's grandson took revenge on Mareengthei. Mareengthei paid with his life for his folly of trusting a stranger with secrets and his arms.



The seven brothers who went hunting

Once there was a man and a wife who had seven sons. The seven brothers were strong and handsome and they loved each other. People gave examples to their children about the unity and hard working nature of the seven brothers.

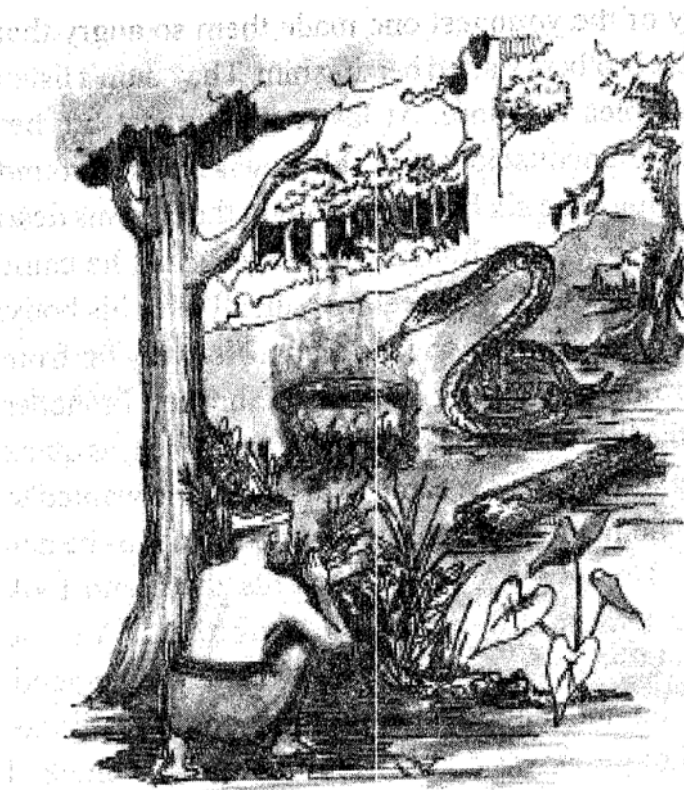
One year they worked hard from dawn to evening everyday in their farm so that they get the best harvest in the whole village. Like everyday they were working when they got tired and sat down to take a rest. They were preparing to eat something, but they had nothing to eat. Then suddenly there was a landslide with a loud noise near the place where they were resting. However, the surprise turned to joy when they saw a big python at the place where the land had given way. They killed it and cut it into pieces. The youngest brother was given the duty to cook it. Meanwhile the six elder brothers went hunting for more animals. Having finished cooking, the



youngest one waited for the others. He heard a strange and terrifying noise not very far off. It was the sound of the angry cry of some kind of animal breaking branches and uprooting trees.

The sound was approaching him fast. He hid behind a big tree and from there he witnessed a strange sight. A big python came and started smelling the curry. The python gave a shrilling cry and climbed up a nearby tree and broke few small branches. It chewed some leaves and spat it into the pot. Then, as if like magic, the pieces of the already cooked python joined together by itself and became alive again as if it was never killed. The two python went away and disappeared into the forest.

The youngest brother was dumbfounded by the strange event he just witnessed. He could not believe his eyes. Now that the food was also gone he was worried what his brothers would say. However



true it was, they wouldn't believe his story. As he was thinking about it his brothers returned. They sat down waiting for their food. The frightened brother came slowly and told them what happened. As he feared, they didn't believe him. Instead they became furious at him. According to them the youngest brother had eaten all the food and in order to save himself he was making up a story which was impossible. The weariness due to hunger and the

story of the youngest one made them so angry that the six brothers started beating him. They didn't listen to his plea anymore. At last the youngest brother became unconscious. He fell down on the ground like a log. The six brothers thought that he was dead and so they went home. After some time, he came to his senses. He was feeling pain all over his body. With great effort he tried to sit up. Not very far from where he was sitting he saw the broken branches and the leaves that the python chewed. Then, as quick as lightning, an idea came to his mind. He wanted to see whether those leaves were as powerful as he had seen. He slowly crawled towards them and took some leaves and started chewing them. And he became strong again and all his wounds disappeared. Now he understood what that tree could really do. He thought it was a very useful one and so plucked all the leaves of the tree and put them in a basket. Instead of returning home he went away and climbed many mountains and crossed many rivers. He wanted to test his leaves somehow. One day he came across a village. At the village boundary he saw a dead dog. He used his medicine on the dog. The dog came to life and started licking his feet. He was very happy. He came into the village with the dog. The people of the village were mourning. When he asked them why

they were crying they said that they were mourning the untimely death of a young girl. He saw that she was beautiful young girl. He told the villagers that he could try to bring her back to life. They thought that he was mad. He also told them that if he could bring her back to life, she be married to him. The villagers agreed. He chewed some of his leaves and rubbed it over the face and limbs of the girl. Suddenly she opened her eyes as if she had been sleeping all that time. The villagers were overjoyed and they cried in their happiness. As was agreed, they married the girl with the youngest brother.

He stayed happily in that village for sometime. Then he took his wife and dog and traveled from village to village and showed them his strange powers. Everybody thought him to be God. As he traveled from place to place he came to a very prosperous village. He settled in that village and made a house for his family. Every morning he went to his farm with his dog. Whenever he went out, he asked his wife to look after his basket of leaves carefully. He also asked him never to touch or open it and to keep it a complete secret from everybody.

One day his wife became very curious about the contents of the basket. While her husband was away she opened the basket and saw dried leaves

grown over with mould. She thought that those leaves must be the precious thing that his husband protected. As they were mouldy she took them out in the open to dry them. The Sun and the Moon saw the leaves and wanted them very much. Without losing any time they came down on Earth and took away the leaves. The man saw the Sun and Moon coming down so he came back hurriedly. When he reached his home they were already high up in the sky with all the

leaves. He was angry as well as anxious. He started looking for some ways to get back the leaves. He took some wine, sprinkled it on the soil and asked all the living beings of the Earth to help him get back the leaves. Then he made a ladder long



enough to reach the sky. He took his faithful dog with him and climbed the ladder. After having climbed high above the ground he looked down and saw the termites were eating at the feet of his ladder. Then he realised that he had missed out the termites in his prayer. He asked his dog to go after the Sun and the Moon while he came down to save the danger. But before he could reach the ground the ladder broke midway and fell down. He was very worried because he could not say the prayer again. However, his obedient dog caught the Sun and the Moon and snatched the leaves from them. But he had no way to come down. It is believed that the eclipse of the Sun and the Moon were not as bright as now. Since they got the powerful leaves, they too became bright and powerful. The worried youngest brother could not get back his dog or the leaves. He could not find the powerful tree either. He and his wife lived the rest of their lives with pain of their losses.



Abung-Rangeng

A long time ago the chief of the Thangal Surung was a strong and brave man called Nongarou. He had a son named Abung. Since childhood, Abung was stronger, more intelligent and braver than all the others. After his father's death, he became the chief of Thangal. He became very famous far and wide because apart from being a strong and clever man, he also had extraordinary powers — he knew many magic spells and medicines that were taught to him by his father.

Abung was in love with a beautiful girl named Peiciliu from the neighbouring village. Although she also loved Abung, Peiciliu couldn't decide for certain because in her village was a friend of Abung, named Rangeng, who also liked her. He was also no less in his qualities than Abung. It was difficult to tell who was better unless a test was done between them. Both of them were always on the lookout to outdo one another without hurting each other. Peiciliu

thought equally about them. It was her idea to marry one between them who can ultimately prove himself to be stronger and cleverer than the other.

One day Rangeng invited Abung for lunch. Abung accepted the invitation happily. Rangeng cooked a prized dog for the lunch. After the cooking was done Rangeng went out of his house. Abung waited for a long time but his friend didn't come back. Abung was becoming very hungry but he

waited for Rangeng. When after a long time he hadn't come back, Abung thought of drinking some wine. He took a bowl and put it into the pitcher to take wine. A strange thing happened. His hand was caught in the pitcher. He could not take it out however





hard he tried. Rangeng came in suddenly and when he saw what was happening he said farcically, "Well, my pitcher does that when somebody tries to steal. Next time please ask me if you want anything." Then he spoke a spell and freed the hand of Abung. Abung was

very embarrassed. His aim was to pay back for this incident. He put up a smiling face and took the lunch together. Before they parted he invited Rangeng to his house for lunch the next day.

Next day Rangeng came as invited. The *nunga* fish caught from the river in Abung's village was very popular for its good taste. Abung caught a lot of them and cooked them for the occasion. They drank wine and sat down together to eat. The cooked fish curry was put in one big bowl. Abung took some with a spoon and started eating. Rangeng also took some on his plate. But whenever he tried to eat, the cooked fish became alive and jumped away. Abung

said, "*Itao*, you are not eating anything. Let me serve you," and served him with big pieces of fish. But still he couldn't eat any of them. He understood that it was a reply for what he had done to Abung. He accepted that Abung was better than him. He also agreed with a heavy heart to the marriage of Peiciliu with Abung.

The wedding ceremony was a grand one. Before returning home, Abung told Peiciliu, "Ask Rangeng to come for your departure along with all the people of your village. We will be receiving you with food and presents. If Rangeng doesn't agree, tell him that you won't go without him." At the time of the departure Rangeng refused to go. Peiciliu told him that she wouldn't go if he didn't. As a result the departure ceremony had to be postponed for three days. Abung was very angry. He sent a message that if his bride was not sent immediately, there would be war. The frightened villagers persuaded Rangeng to go. At last he agreed.

So the departure ceremony was held and many people came to see off Peiciliu to her husband's house. There was a big party at Abung's house with lots of food and drink. When the guests were about to return, Abung asked them to go away in a line so that he could give a present to each and everybody. He gave a piece of iron, a pack of meat and wine to everybody. All went away happily. But Abung asked Rangeng to go last. Rangeng suspected that it was

Abung's plan to capture him. Very quickly he spoke a spell and jumped up and hid himself in the ceiling of a house. When his villagers could not find him they thought he must have gone already, and so they went without him. But Abung's people knew that Rangeng was hiding somewhere. Abung was furious. With his powers he saw where Rangeng was hiding. He called his name and asked him to come and take his gift. Rangeng, ignorant that he was seen, ignored the call.

Abung was enraged. He decided to kill Rangeng. He asked all his villagers to bring wooden pestles. Along with some men he pulled down the house where Rangeng was hiding. He was tied to the stake and the pestles were burnt from below. Because of the spell put on him by Abung, Rangeng was not burning. He only felt the heat while his body turned black and then red. Many people from the other villages could not bear to see the suffering of Rangeng as he writhed in pain inside the fire. Suddenly a woman came out and threw water on Rangeng, and with a trail of black smoke Rangeng flew up towards the sky. From that day, Abung lived happily without any enemy.



The Nungshuk catcher

A very long time ago a very strong and intelligent man lived in Andro. He was both feared and respected by all. He never missed a target with his arrow. He had also mastered many spells of magic. But all his strength was unknown to neighbouring villages. It was a time when Andro was not a strong community and was looked down upon by others. They were thought of as a small and uncivilised community. They were attacked and looted frequently.

There was another tribe called Nungshuk that was very strong and fierce. A group of four or five of them was enough to attack a small village. Nobody dared to face them. Every now and then they used to kill and eat buffaloes of Andro. The Andronians were not able to find the culprit of the missing buffaloes.

One day the strong man of Andro decided that they had had enough of the stealing of buffaloes



and whoever was or were doing it, they would punish them. So he set out with three men and followed the foot trail of a stolen buffalo. They had gone a long way, still the trail didn't give them any clue or

any sign of the lost animal. The three men were about to give up the search but the strong man wasn't. He said, "I am not going back until I find the thieves. You may go back if you want." The three of them felt ashamed and so went after him. They searched through mountains, rivers and forests, but still no sign of the buffalo. The strong man at last used his powers and saw where the buffalo was. As they came towards that direction and across the Thoubal river, they saw some Nungshuk tribes eating the stolen buffalo with its tail posted on a high pole as a flag.

The men from Andro shouted at them saying why they were stealing their buffaloes. They also said they should pay back with the same number of

buffaloes that they had stolen. The Nungshuks, hearing them, laughed and jeered at them. In no way they were afraid of them. Thinking of teaching the Nungshuks a lesson, the strong man told them that if they didn't give back the buffaloes they would not be allowed to leave. Now the Nungshuks were also getting angry. They told the Andronians to go away or die in their hands. Both sides prepared themselves for a fight. The strong man shot arrows at the thighs of the Nungshuks. So fierce and strong were the Nungshuks that they pulled out the arrows and broke them. A fierce fight ensued. But the Nungshuks could not stand long in front of the strong man from Andro. They fled although many were captured and killed. They went back to Andro victorious while the Nungshuk village was very angry to hear the bad news. Many of them took arms and came to Andro. They warned them to hand them over the strong man who killed their fathers and uncles. When they came to the house of the strong man with swords and spears, he asked, "What do you want, my sons?"

"We are here to avenge our kin," they replied.

Again he asked he asked very indifferently, "You want to avenge your kin?"

"Yes," was their reply.

“In that case, please wait while I take my meal and sit down on those benches,” and he went inside.

The young people from Nungshuk sat down on the long benches. Soon they realised that by some kind of magic of the strong man they were stuck to the benches. However hard they tried, they couldn't get their bottom off the benches. When they were totally exhausted the strong man came out with all his war dress and weapons. He shouted at them that he was ready for whatever they wanted and suddenly took a jump and landed in the middle of the courtyard. The Nungshuks were so terrified that they didn't know when their weapons fell off their hands. All of them sat still dumbstruck. Instead of fighting, they said that he indeed deserved to kill their kin, and they left. And so because he defeated the Nungshuks, he was called the “Nungshuk” catcher.



Lenchanghoi

In the days long gone, in a certain community there was a rich family. The family had but only one daughter although there were seven sons. The girl was very pretty and her name was Lenchanghoi. The family lived very happily without any signs of the smallest sorrow. They loved each other very much. Years passed and the brothers and sisters became young men and woman. Their parents also reached their ripe old age and passed away.

The seven brothers loved their eldest sister very much. They let her have whatever she wanted. So beautiful she was that whatever she did, only added to her beauty. If they could bring the most beautiful stars, *Sajik* and *Thaba*, and decorate their sister, she would have the most beautiful ornaments ever. Before they went, they asked their sister to remain inside the house and never to open the door that had ten iron shutters overlapping one another. Then they took whatever provisions they needed and went away. Many days had passed but they couldn't find *Sajik* and *Thaba*. At last they gave up and started for home.



While they were away, Khaalbompu, a terrible creature — half man and half tiger — came to the village. He was a merciless beast that killed humans and ate them. Everybody was terrified whenever he came. It was not his idea to attack big and strong families. Instead he attacked the lone houses with less and weak people. That day he came into a small hut where an old woman lived. But she was a very clever woman. She said, “I am too old and weak to satisfy your hunger. There is a girl very rich and

very beautiful. Her seven brothers have also gone away in search of *Sajik-Thaba*. She is alone. She won't open the door to anybody except her brothers. So you say '*Kou Lenchanghoi, kou lenchanghoi, thipee-thoshong, kot-nei-hono kei nanaotebalapnela kahunge buchun sagi kabeiye mechin sagi kabeiye*' (*Eeche Lenchanghoi, eeche Lenchanghoi, open the ten shutters. Our food is over and we are returned.*) and she will open the door."

The excited Khaalbompu came to Lenchanghoi's house and said what the old woman told him to. But the door wasn't opened. She said from behind the door that his voice wasn't her brothers'. Angry and disappointed, he came back to the old woman to tell her what happened. She told him that his voice was very big and hoarse. He should speak slower and sweeter. She made him speak those words again and again until he sounded like one of the brothers. He came and said the words again to Lenchanghoi. This time she opened the door thinking her brothers had returned. As soon as she opened the door Khaalbompu caught her. He closed the ten shutters from inside and ran away through

the back door. Seeing that she was very beautiful, he decided not to eat her, but marry her. He brought materials required for making clothes so that she can stay at his house making clothes. As there was no way of escaping, Lenchanghoi pretended to be happy. Khaalbompu also kept a close watch over her very cunningly. He told her that he was going away for five-six days and then he returned on the same day. At other times he said that he was going only for few hours and he would return two or three days after.

Meanwhile, the brothers returned home and called their sister to open the door. They called again and again, but the door wasn't opened. They were getting anxious and so decided to break the door. The eldest brother struck the first shutter with his body, but he died doing it. In this way six of the brothers died in breaking down the six shutters. The youngest brother broke the remaining four shutters slowly and came inside, but the house was empty. He found the back door locked from outside from which he came to know that she was taken away that way. He was determined to find his sister and

punish the guilty. He learnt from the villagers that it was Khaalbompu who stole his sister. He put a spell on himself and he turned into a dove. Then he flew towards the direction where Khaalbompu lived. As he flew he saw a woman collecting firewood. He asked her whether she had seen his sister Lenchanghoi. She replied, "Will see, will know. Will reach mother's house, will come to father's place." He was very overjoyed to hear that. On his way he saw a group of people working in a farm. To them he asked whether they had seen his sister Lenchanghoi. They also replied, "Will see, will know. Will reach mother's house, will come to father's place!" So he continued his flight. Then he saw a lady weaving. He asked her if she had seen his sister. She was happy knowing that her brothers had come for her. She told the dove to come down and drink the rice water from her hand if he really was her brother. The dove came down and drank it. Both of them were very happy; they told each other whatever had happened. She was quite content to know that the bodies of the brothers were still inside the house. Khaalbompu was not at home at that time. She said

that he was very cunning and he wouldn't be able to kill him alone. Moreover, he was returning that same day for he said that morning that he was going away for ten days. So the sister and the brother were thinking how to kill him. She had kept some old good wine. She said, "You should hide behind the wall of the house. I will give the wine to Khaalbompu. You make a hole in the pitcher from behind the wall. Whenever I drink, drain out some wine from the pitcher, but close it when he drinks." So he hid behind the wall and she sat down to weave. As suspected, Khaalbompu came back hanging a deer on his back and a shambhar on his shoulder. He put down the animals and asked her to cook them. Lenchanghoi treated him more lovingly than before. She cooked the deer and said, "You must be tired hunting. I've prepared some strong wine for you." As she started to prepare the wine, he asked her to drink first. She said, "Ok, I'll drink first." And it was loud enough for her brother to hear. Quickly her brother drained out some wine from the pitcher. She said that she'd had her share and gave the pipe to him. When he was drinking the hole in the pitcher was blocked.

Gradually, Khaalbompu became so drunk that he could not drink any more. Lenchanghoi said, "Even I've drunk my share. Now, be like a man and finish up your share." Ashamed as he was, he drank more and became unconscious and slept. Then the brother and sister bound all the precious items. She also asked him to bring the parrot that had the life of Khaalbompu. With all these they ran away. When Khaalbompu came to his senses Lenchanghoi was gone. He ran towards her home where he believed she must have fled. On the way he saw them and went after them. Lenchanghoi told her brother to kill the parrot quickly which he did. Instantly Khaalbompu fell down like a dry log and died. When they reached home Lenchanghoi put some magic spell and made her six brothers alive again. And they lived happily ever after.



Chem Taatpa Thuming

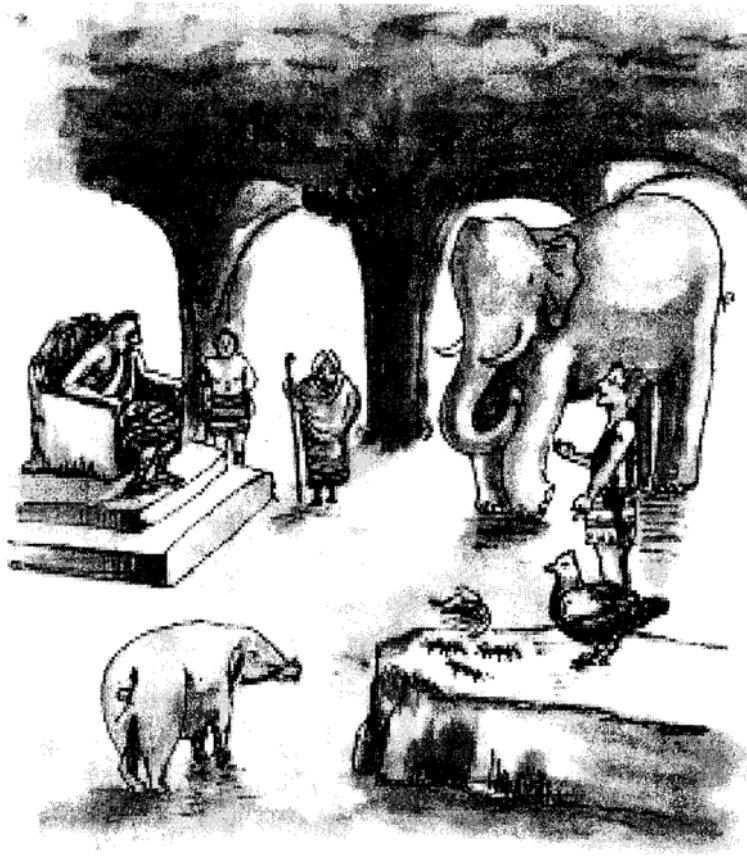
(The man and his knife)

This is a story very very old. There was a man who used to go to the forest to collect firewood. One day he was sitting on the big rock in the middle of a river and was sharpening his big knife to cut firewood. He left the *namei* of his *khudei* lose. There was a shrimp swimming nearby. Without any reason it came inside the *khudei* of the man and kicked his private part. The man jumped and ran in pain and collided against a plantain grove on the river bank. Unknowingly he just cut up the plantain trees into pieces. A bat that was sleeping in the trees was startled from its sleep and flew in all directions. Moreover, it was blinded by the bright sunlight. It flew into the ears of an elephant that was eating those plantain leaves. As the bat couldn't see anything it thought that it had found a good home and perched upside down inside the elephant's ear. The elephant was so startled by the pain of the sharp claws of the bat that it ran around like a mad animal. It flattened many mounds and fell many trees. Along with those, it

destroyed the nest of a jungle hen hatching eggs inside a bush of reeds. The hen was very annoyed. It challenged the elephant to a fight and scratched the ground with its claws in intimidation, and in doing so destroyed a colony of ants. The ants thought that they were attacked and ran in all directions looking for the enemy. The first animal they saw was a wild boar sleeping soundly after a hearty meal. They took the snoring sound of the wild boar to be a war cry. So they came in slowly and bit the soft part of the boar's nose. The boar ran around in pain and broke the weakly built hut of an old widow.

The lonely widow was very angry. She thought that she was made a victim because she was alone and weak. She complained the king to give appropriate punishment to those guilty. The king heard her story and sent a man to call the wild boar. The king asked the scared boar, "Mr. Boar, why did you tear down the hut of the widow. Did you think that she was weak and lonely? Answer me or prepare yourself for pain."

The wild boar replied in a low shivering voice, "O king. I am innocent. While I was sleeping, the ants bit my nose. I was running in pain and accidentally touched the widow's house. I am innocent, O king."



The ants were called. The king asked, "Why did you bit the wild boar, ants?" The ants answered, "O good king. We were inside our when the hen broke our colony. We thought we were attacked. When we saw the wild boar snoring, we thought him to be crying for war and so we bit his nose. We are innocent, O kind one."

The hen was called. The king asked why it broke the colony of the ants. The hen answered, "My Lord, I was sitting on my eggs in the reed bush without eating and drinking for so many days. Then the elephant came and trampled my nest. I was angry and challenged the elephant by scratching the ground in which the ant colony was accidentally destroyed. I am innocent. If I am to be punished, then the elephant should also get the same punishment."

The elephant was called for questioning. While in the king's court it was asked why it broke the hen's nest. It answered, "My great king. I was happily eating plantain leaves when the bat came inside my ear and perched inside with its sharp claws. I ran around in pain and the nest was broken by accident. I am innocent, O king."

After hearing the elephant, the king was certain that the bat was the one guilty. The bat was called and he asked, "Hey bat, why did you have to go and sit in the elephant's ear? Don't you have any other place?" The bat replied, "My Lord, I was sleeping on the plantain trees when the man came running and cut down the trees. I flew around in fear and came into the elephant's ear because I could not see; I am blind during the day. I am innocent. The man with the knife is the one guilty."

The man was called. When he came the king asked, "You are the one who was sharpening your knife. Why did you cut down the plantain trees without any reason? See the consequences of your action." The man answered, "My lord, I live by cutting firewood. I was sharpening my knife when the shrimp kicked at my private part. I was startled by the sudden pain and I don't know what happened for a moment after that. I am innocent."

The king called the shrimp and asked, "Shrimp, why did you kick the private part of the man?" The shrimp replied, "O king, I was just swimming and I saw this man sharpening his knife sitting in the river. I thought it would be fun to kick him, so I did."

The king was very angry to hear this. He roared, "You are a very reckless creature. Look at all the pain and destruction you have caused due to your stupid action. You deserve to die for this."

The shrimp knew that if it didn't do something very quick, it was surely going to die. It said, "My lord, you are very just. I deserve to die for my action. But how will you put me to death? If you put me into the fire, I'll become prettier. Inside a fire my colour turns to golden and then you might feel pity

on me and spare my life. But if you throw me in the water, I'll become very ugly. Then you will hate me and then you could kill me very easily." The king thought over the words of the shrimp and said, "Ok then, kill the shrimp by throwing it into the water." The king's soldiers threw the shrimp into the water. The shrimp was very happy to be alive and swam away and hid behind the rocks. The king was very angry to hear that they had been befooled by the shrimp. He asked the elephant to drink up all the water. When the elephant had drunk all the water, the shrimp had nowhere to hide. It was caught among the rocks and killed. Thus the shrimp was punished to death for disturbing and creating problems for other uselessly.



The stepmother

It was a certain hill village where a man lived with his wife and two young baby boys. Due to an unfortunate incident, his wife died. He found it very hard to look after his two children. Therefore, he married again. In the beginning, his second wife treated the two boys with love. But after the first year she started to treat them badly, although she pretended to be good when her husband was around.

The two boys grew up into young boys who could run around and play on their own. The elder one could even do small household chores. The stepmother made him do all the work and the younger one was not given any food. Whenever he cried of hunger he was bitten up. The man was not aware of all this. The two boys also didn't tell anything to their father for fear of their stepmother.

The harvest was done and the granaries filled. The man would be at his home for the coming few months. One day he was making baskets and his



wife was weaving in the verandah. Two mynahs, a husband and wife, were eating the grain that was being dried in the lawn. They were quarrelling as they were eating. The wife-mynah said that they should kill his previous children because she could not look after them. But the husband-mynah didn't agree to that. The wife-mynah was his second wife, and she didn't like her step-children. The man's wife heard their quarrel and she could not bear to hear that any longer. She shouted at her husband to kill the birds. The birds flew away before anything could be done to them. But the incident made the man to think about his own children. He understood why his wife was angry at the two birds. Till that day he had ignored as rumour what the people talked about his wife. He also began to understand why his two

sons were so weak. He was afraid that she might kill them when he was absent from home. However, he didn't say anything, nor did he show any anger. Slowly, he thought upon a way to save his sons from the stepmother.

Some months passed and another crop season was nearing. The man decided to take his sons away to a safe place and leave them there. He packed lots of food in his hang-basket, took his two sons and left home secretly. They went over many mountains until they came to a big tree in a big forest. He laid his sons under the tree and made them sleep. He put the packet of food near them and left them there while he returned home.

The boys slept soundly and woke up to find that their father was gone. Thinking that their father would return, they waited. They looked up the tree and saw a bird's nest. The elder brother climbed the tree and found eggs in the nest. He threw down one for his brother, but it broke as he could not catch it. The elder brother ate nicely by sitting on the branch while the younger one licked the broken one from the ground. A little while after eating the eggs, a strange thing happened to the elder brother. Feathers started to grow on his body. Slowly his mouth turned into a beak and his hands became wings. He became

a bird completely and sang *kuku-leng kuku-leng* and flew away. Nothing happened to the younger boy as he only licked the broken egg. For sometime he ate the food left by his father and waited. But nobody came: neither his father, nor his brother. When his food was over, he started to walk. He saw a river and leaned down to drink water. He slipped and fell into the water. The strong current of the water swept him away and he was caught in a fish net of an old woman. When the old woman pulled up her net she was surprised to find a young boy in it. The boy was still alive. Who could be the boy? She revived him and took care of him until the boy could talk or walk again. She was alone and a widow, so she adopted the boy as her own son.

Years passed and the boy grew up to a young man. He was strong and intelligent. But being from a poor family, he earned his living by herding cattle and buffaloes of others. One afternoon, the princess was taking a walk with her friends when she saw the cowherd. She was very much attracted to the young man. The king had no son and she was the only daughter, which made her to be a pampered girl. Till now she had rejected every boy that her father showed her as a match. From that day onwards, she decided to make that cowherd her husband.

Everyday she came to see him. Her parents were worried. They asked whom she wanted to marry. She told them that she wanted to marry the cowherd, son of the widow. Her parents insisted her to choose somebody else, but she was determined. And this angered her parents. Her father asked how could a princess live with a cowherd. But she told them that she would marry only him and nobody else. At last her parents yielded to her and they were married.



Not many days had passed since their marriage when the king died. The princess was the only heir, due to which she became the queen and her husband, the cowherd, became the king. The land prospered under him, but he was not happy. He always thought how to bring back his brother who had turned into a bird. Suddenly, an idea came to him. He held a big feast at his palace and invited all the birds to it. He started looking for his brother among them. When he could not find him, he cried “*kuku-leng, kuku-leng*” and walked around. His brother heard him and came flying to him. He was very happy to find his younger brother becoming a king. He contentedly ate the food that his younger brother gave. The younger one asked many learned and wise men about how to turn his elder brother back to human form, but nobody knew how to do it. They cried helplessly. The elder brother flew away with tears and the younger brother stood and looked at his brother fly away with a burden in his heart. Thus, it is believed that the bird *kuku-leng* was turned from human.



Moltinchaan

A very long time ago, there was a girl unmatched in her beauty. The hill slope where her village was located seemed to shine with her beauty. Her parents proudly named her Moltinchaan.

Everyday before sunrise, she used to go for collecting firewood with her friends. One day seven of them went to the forest. Before the sun had cast the last shadow of the trees, they had collected enough for the day. On their way home they were tired and rested by putting down their loads. As they were resting they saw a strange looking man coming that way. He had an ugly face and he was playing a *khung* made of human skull and finger bones. The girls felt disgusted and terrified. They decided that they would lift their own baskets and whoever could not do it alone would ask help of the strange man. They all agreed and lifted their own baskets. Surprisingly, Moltinchaan could not lift her basket which she could do easily before. She tried again



and again, but in vain. According to the condition, she had to ask for help from the strange man. As the man lifted her basket, he whispered to her, "Today evening, when all your friends are gathered at the dormitory, you should not tell about this incident or about me or

about my *khung* to anybody. If you do so you will face grave danger. I will definitely come there to catch you." Moltinchaan felt fearfully funny to hear him. With a face half-smiling and half-serious she looked at the man for the last time and ran after her friends.

After she reached home she was very much tempted to tell others about the incident and the man, but she didn't. In the evening the girls' dormitory and the boys' dormitory came out. She could not believe the man, but at the same time she was scared. Sometimes she almost talked about it. She said,

“Today morning...” and she stopped. As she did so two or three times, her friends asked her what it was that she wanted to tell. Moltinchaan told them that she could not tell; if she did she could be caught. Everybody laughed and asked who would come to catch her. The boys assured her that nobody can harm her while they were there, so she could tell them whatever it was without any fear. The leader of the boys told her that if she was afraid he would close the door of the hall and he would be responsible for her safety. So Moltinchaan told them the incident of the morning.

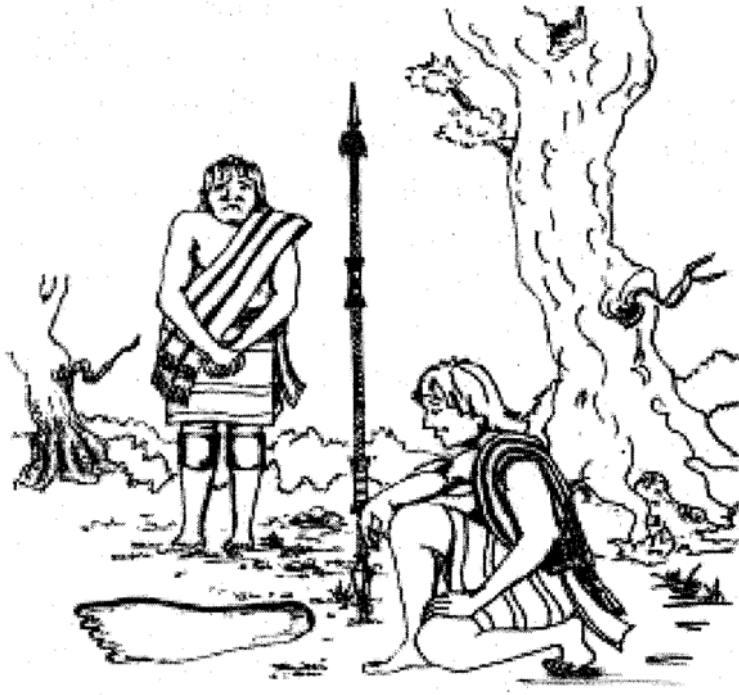
As soon as she finished her story the strange man appeared inside the room. Nobody knew where he came from. With his powers he made everyone in the room unconscious and took away Moltinchaan. Once he left, everybody began to regain their consciousness. The news spread through the whole village. They thought of the man as evil. Moltinchaan’s parents were overcome with grief. Everybody was trying to find a way to bring back the girl from the evil and powerful demon.

Moltinchaan’s parents were, however, very wise. They devised a way to find a man who could fight the kidnapper. They brought out a big stone, seven packets of rice, seven different dishes and

seven pitchers of wine and announced that the one who could throw that stone up and eat the seven packets each of rice and dishes and drink the wine before the stone fell to the ground would be taken as the man who could fight that evil man bring back their daughter, and if he could do so, they would marry him to their daughter. Many strong men came, even from other villages, but all failed the test. The parents were losing hope for no strong man was left.

There were but only two brothers left to take the test. They were very poor and earned their livelihood by hunting rats from paddy fields. It was proposed that the two brothers be called to take the test, but the girls father hesitated because he had no faith in them. The villagers insisted to at least let them take the test, because even if they were poor, they seemed to be strong men. So they were called and the younger brother took the test first. He lightly threw up the stone and ate up six packets of rice. Everybody was surprised. Even the strongest man before him could eat only three. The elder brother came and before the stone fell he ate all the food and drank all the wine. Everybody came to believe that the two brothers were capable enough to fight that evil demon and bring back the girl. After being

told the whole story, the two brothers set out for their search. As they tracked their enemy over mountains and rivers, the footprint of the evil man became larger and larger. The younger brother was scared. He said, "Look, his prints are becoming larger and larger. He seems to be a very strong man, I am scared, brother." The elder one smiled and said, "If you are afraid you can stay behind. I will put you in a place where no beast or man can harm you." Then he dug up the soil with his sword and made a mound



with a hole inside as a cave. He asked his brother to stay inside it and wait for his return. When the younger one was inside he put a spell on the mound as a protection and left.

After he had gone a long distance, he came to a village of evil deities like the one who kidnapped Moltinchaan. He came to his house and found Moltinchaan, but the demon wasn't there. He called out everybody and announced, "Listen to me. My name is Yaangchal, and I've come to take away Moltinchaan. When her kidnapper, the evil man, comes back, tell him that he can come after me if he can do what I am going to do now, or else he will be killed." And then he ran and crossed the demon's house in one jump. He then took a long pole and stuck it to the ground. He clapped only once and the pole was buried in the ground. The demons were so afraid that they let him go away unchallenged.

Before Yaangchal and Moltinchaan could reach home, the sun set. At sunset the demon also returned home to find that Moltinchaan was gone. He knew that she could not have escaped alone. So he asked his neighbours about what had happened. They told him everything what had happened. One of the old demons said, "If you want to go after that man, then jump over your house in one go." The demon tried,

but he couldn't do it. Again the old demon gave him a pole and asked him to stick it whole into the ground. That also he could do only halfway. The old one said, "You failed. It is better for you not to chase that man because he is too powerful for you." But the demon paid no attention to their words and went after Moltinchaan. Far ahead, Yaangchal and Moltinchaan rested as it was already dark. On the other hand the demon became more powerful at night, so he easily caught up with them.

The gods were watching the events closely. They were discussing whether to save the man or to save the demon. One of them said, "Let's save the demon. Whatever he is, he used to be one of us. His defeat will be our defeat." Another said, "No let's save the man. Man worships us." All of them agreed to the second argument and decided to save the man. They came to Moltinchaan and said, "If you want to kill that demon, cut down the grasses around you as soon as he approaches." She was surprised, but she did as she was told and the demon died.

Morning came and they set out for their home. On the way they came to the mound where Yaangchal hid his younger brother whose name was Purul. He was banging the mound from inside with his hands. When he came out of the mound he was already

dumb. It so happened that the spirits that lived underground had taken his tongue. Yaangchal thought that no beast or man could have entered the mound. Therefore it must have been some power from under the ground. He began searching for a clue and he saw a hole inside the mound.

“I’ll go and bring back your tongue from whoever had taken it. Wait till I return,” said he and went inside the hole while Moltinchaan and Purul waited outside. He went down and down the hole until he reached the underground land of the spirits. They were playing with the tongue of Purul. He shouted at them, “I am Yaangchal. Give me back the tongue of my brother or else revenge will be upon you.” They looked at him with surprised eyes. Some of them thought that he was no ordinary man, and so they were in favour of returning the tongue. Some were not ready to do that. While they were quarrelling, Yaangchal caught one spirit and threw him so far that they couldn't see where he fell. The demons were afraid to see that. Without another word, they gave him back his brother's tongue. The moment Yaangchal took the tongue in his hand, Purul started speaking. He could hear his younger brother from far below. He called up to pull up the creeper through which he came down. But an evil thought

had come to Purul. He wanted the beautiful girl for himself. He knew that if his brother came out, he could not get her. Every time his brother called to pull him up, he asked if he was telling him to cut the creeper. Yaangchal shouted in frustration, "Are you deaf? Can't you listen what I am saying?" Purul replied, "Yes brother, I'll do it." And he cut off the creeper. Yaangchal fell back into the hole. Purul pretended to be sad but helpless. He brought back Moltinchaan to her home and everyone was happy. Moltinchaan was married to Purul.

Yaangchal was very angry with his brother. However, as he had no means to get back to surface, he kept walking in that sub-terranean land. On his way he came to an underground village. In one of the houses, a beautiful looking lady was weaving. She was extremely beautiful with fair skin, rounded eyes and tender hands passing the spindle left and right. She also saw the young man, strong and handsome. Their eyes met each other. Yaangchal took the opportunity and approached the lady and expressed his love for her. As a result he married her and stayed there. Few years had passed and he had a loving family with his wife and children, but he could not forget his younger brother. He had but one lesson to teach his brother. An idea came upon

him. He planted a nicker bean plant. Day after day he nourished the plant, and day after day the plant grew stretching its tendrils to reach higher and higher up until at last the creeper reached the surface. Yaangchal now knew that he could get back to the surface and return home. His wife was an intelligent woman. She always knew that one day or the other her husband would go back. Therefore she always left her children with him. One day he began climbing the creeper. His children ran and told their mother. Together they shook the creeper from below. Yaangchal could not climb any more and he fell down. All his ways were shut.

There was one old widow in the village. Yaangchal took her consultation. She advised him to return, but there was no possibility of taking back his wife and children. She told him to take a bag of rice bran next time he climbed the creeper plant. Yaangchal immediately understood the meaning of her advice. He took some rice bran in a bag and began climbing the plant. When his children started shaking the creeper, he told them that he was going to catch birds for them and he was throwing down a bird for them. And saying that he threw down a handful of the bran. The bran powder got into the eyes of the children and they couldn't open their eyes for a while. Meanwhile he climbed up and emerged from the ground. From there he went towards his village to search Purul. He could not

find his house. In a corner of the village he saw a wild cat eating a hen. He caught the cat and asked from where it got the hen. The cat replied, "I caught it from Purul's farm. He is very rich and he has lots of cattle, buffaloes, chicken and ducks. he won't even know if I catch one of them."

"You must now go and steal another chicken from the same farm," said Yaangchal and released the cat.

The wild cat was too happy to be alive. It ran to Purul's farm. By following the cat, Yaangchal came to know Purul's house. He went straight up to the verandah. Purul's children were playing but he had gone to a village gathering. The children were sent to call their father. To their father they reported, "When he stepped on the verandah, our house shook. When he put down his load, the land shook like an earthquake." Purul was frightened. He knew that it was his brother and that he could not escape him. Shivering, he came to his elder brother and asked for forgiveness. Yaangchal wasn't very forgiving of his brother's treachery. He bit him although he didn't kill him. He was made a worker in his own farm while Yaangchal made Moltinchaan his wife and raised his brother's children as his.

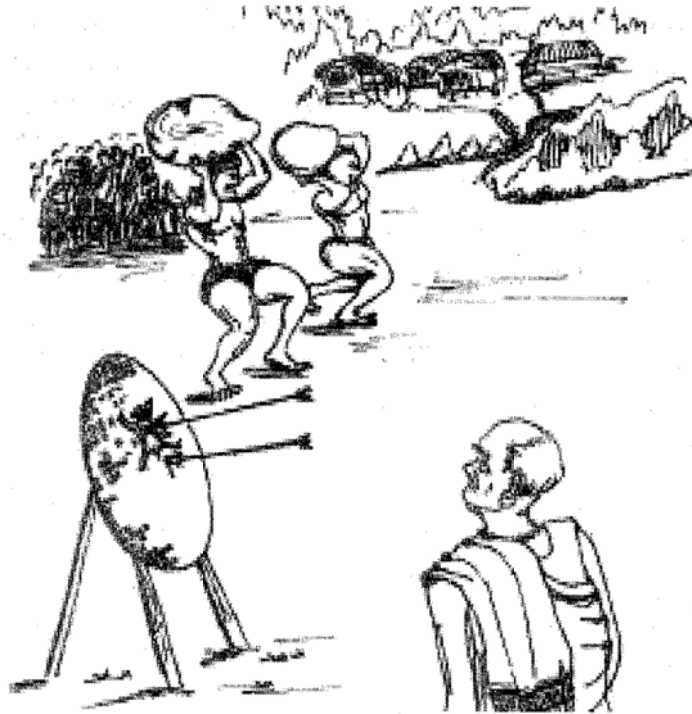


Thumkhel

Once there lived among the Anals a man as powerful as the Gods. He was feared by all for he could capture and kill a wild boar with his bare hands. He could win battles single-handedly. He was strong, clever and courageous. His name was Thumkhel. Even his villagers were afraid of him and the mere mention of his name stopped children crying. The people believed that he had some divine powers. Thumkhel had a very faithful and clever dog that always followed him. It always obeyed Thumkhel and was present to assist him every time. Thumkhel was undefeated in strength since his childhood. Nobody could throw as far, climb as high, or run as fast as him. People feared and envied at the same time. His strength grew as he became older and older.

This was a time when villages would go at war against each other very often. People were killed and animals captured. But the Anals were not afraid as they had Thumkhel. Everybody knew he can achieve victory in battle alone. As nobody could defeat Thumkhel, the Anals became the strongest community.

One day God Wangbrel took the form of a man and entered the village. He fell in love with a beautiful girl there. Being an incarnation, the girl was easily attracted by his good looks. The beautiful girl's affair with an unknown man from an unknown community angered the villagers. The young men of the village challenged Wangbrel to a fight, not knowing that he was the human form of God. They were very certain of their victory because they had Thumkhel. The villagers challenged Wangbrel in race, stone



throw and archery, failing which he would be killed. Wangbrel agreed and held a race first. Thumkhel was not able to overtake Wangbrel. Every time he came near, Wangbrel picked up speed and took the lead by a bigger margin. Thumkhel was defeated in race. In stone throw, they both threw the same distance, but Wangbrel's stone was double the size of Thumkhel's. Wangbrel won in archery as well. Now people were getting suspicious and tried to know who really this man was who defeated Thumkhel. As Wangbrel took the girl away, the villagers tied a long tread to the girl's cloth leaving them a trail. The trail led them to a big hole in the ground. Wangbrel also disclosed Himself to the villagers. Thus the villagers came to believe that there was no man who could defeat Thumkhel except God. Thumkhel's strength grew day by day. However, his victories in battle and hunting only made him more bloodthirsty and ruthless, which now affected even his own villagers.

The village was now concerned. They plotted to kill the proud but dangerous Thumkhel. Knowing that he could not be defeated by any man in a fight, they decided to kill him secretly. Thumkhel got sense of this and he fled immediately with his dog. Seeing the villagers pursuing him, he hid himself and his

dog at the top of a very tall and dense-leaved tree called Abung. He laid his broad shield on the branches and sat there with his dog. Abung, the tree, was so tall and had foliage so dense that he could not be seen from below. The villagers thought that the lost Thumkhel must be hiding up that amazing tree. So they started shooting arrows up the tree. Thumkhel was untouched by the arrows because of the shield.

Knowing that the villagers won't go back until he was killed, Thumkhel cut an ear of his dog and let the blood fall down. The villagers saw the blood and left thinking that he was dead. In the village they caught Thumkhel's son and said that he would be killed like his father. The boy began to cry calling his father. Thumkhel heard this and came back running, fearing his son was going to be killed.

He brought a big bull to the place where his son was bound. Then he sang saying that he was there to save his son from them, and that he would give them a big bull in return for his son. While the surprised villagers were looking at each other, he jumped in the middle, freed his son and left the bull at the place where his son was bound. He took his

son away and never came back to the village. The terrified villagers never pursued him again.

After Thumkhel was gone, the once strong village became weaker and weaker. It was no longer feared by other villages. Many villagers deserted the village and the population dwindled. Thumkhel's pride that he was the strongest landed him into misfortune at last. His own people began to dislike him. Even his own people were struck by misfortune and had to leave the village.



Khekmal On Thiling

A very long time ago the Kharams were ruled by a very powerful king. He had two daughters but no son. The two daughters were good-natured and beautiful. They always went with their parents to their farm from the time they were very young. It was their duty to protect the crop from birds from the day of sowing to the day of harvesting. Their father made a platform for them to keep watch. He tied the rope-ends of a *kalboring* to the platform so that they could pull at the end and move the ropes stretched all over the field to scare away birds. So they spend their childhood playing and scaring birds until they were on the threshold of adulthood.

One day a fine looking young man came to their farm and helped them in their work. Although the man was a stranger, they welcomed his assistance and said nothing. He came the following day also. The sisters asked about his name and whereabouts. But he kept silent. Otherwise, he was very jovial. This went on for some days.

Suddenly one morning the two sisters found the ropes of the *kalboring* broken into pieces. This

agitated them very much. With great effort they joined the ropes together again. That day when the man came, he was not told about the ropes. The next day the same thing happened with the ropes. In fact, it became an everyday routine, and every morning the sisters spent their time repairing the ropes. On one such day, the elder sister said, "If anybody could help us in preventing the ropes from being torn, I say that I'll make her my best friend if the person is a girl; or marry him if he was a he." The moment she said that, the man came out of nowhere and said, "What did you say just now?" The girl blushed and replied that it was nothing. But he insisted in such a way that they had to reply. He became very happy. In a few minutes he repaired the ropes. Next morning nothing happened to the ropes. The elder sister fell in love with the man. The ropes were never broken again.

One day the two sisters pressed him to tell his name, for one day or the other the people would have to know that. Although he was reluctant to tell it, he gave it at last. "Whenever you want to meet me, send your younger sister and call me by saying '*Itungbunga thekman on kaunang-maa hongaarauti*' and I'll surely come. You should call me by standing on that ant-hill," and he pointed to an ant-hill at one corner of the field.

And so whenever the younger sister called him that way, he came. Once he came in the form of a big snake and turned into his human form in front of her eyes. She was struck with terror. From that day she always avoided the man. She didn't tell it to her sister either. She started skipping her morning meals for fear of getting near the man. By the time harvest was near, she was very thin and weak.

During one of those days, the elder sister told the man, "Tomorrow, there is a gathering of the boys and girls of the village, and I won't be coming to the farm. So you don't have to come tomorrow." The next day she was at the festival while the younger sister went to the farm with her father. He asked his daughter why she always skipped her morning food and what was happening in the farm. With some hesitation she told her father everything. The angry father thought of killing the man. He asked her daughter to call him. She told him that he wouldn't come because her sister had told him not to. But he was certain that he would come if she called. So she stood on the ant-hill and started calling him again and again. Her father was hiding nearby with his knife. The man heard the repeated calls and became worried. Thinking what could have happened to the sisters, he came in the form of a snake. Quickly the father jumped out and cut the snake into pieces and



threw them into a pit which was left after digging out yams. He told his daughter to go back and join the celebrations and to keep it a secret.

The elder sister, exhausted by a whole day of celebrations, slept as soon as she returned home. The man came in her dream and said, "I have been killed by your father and thrown into a pit in your farm. I am not a man and now you can see my true

godly form,” and he showed his snake form. He continued, “If you love me truly, come tomorrow morning with a thick blanket. Pick up my pieces from the pit and join them on the blanket. I will then get back my form as well as my life. If you do not come, I’ll be dead forever!” She woke up suddenly from her sleep. The more she thought about the dream the more tense she became. Without saying a word to anybody, she took a blanket and ran to the field crying. Her younger sister saw her going and ran after her worried. It was already dawn when she reached the farm. With uncontrolled sobs she looked into the yam-pit and saw exactly the same thing as in her dream. She picked them up and arranged them on the blanket. The snake became alive and turned into the young man as before. Together they went to the river. The man turned back into a snake and wriggled into the water. The girl also went after him into the river. The younger sister who was watching all these from a little distance came running and cried out, “My dear sister! Please don’t go. It was my fault. Please forgive me.”

“No, you did nothing wrong. It is nothing but my fate. This is no longer my home. If you want to have a happy life in your future, follow the river and you will come across a tree with many branches. Under the tree you will find weaving tools that you will use during the day. During the night climb the

tree. To the tree you say '*Ithing inshang inshang bongna inshang inshang*' (Rise up, O! tree) and the tree will grow up. And when you say '*Ithing inem inem bongna inem inem*' (Come down, O! Tree) and it will grow short. If you stay there no living creature can harm you. One day a handsome man will come, whom you should marry."

As she finished her words the river water surged and submerged her taking her to the east. The water calmed down as if nothing had happened. The younger sister was dazed as if she had just seen a nightmare. For a long time she sat near the river and thought whether or not to follow her sister's words.

At last she decided to do it. She stood up and walked along the flow of the river for days without stopping until she came to the tree that her sister told her of. She began weaving under the tree by day and climbed and stayed on the tree by night. After the cloth was finished, she put it on and at that moment she became very beautiful. She now truly believed her sister's words and spent her days waiting for the man who would come for her.

Not many days had passed and the king of that land came with his men looking for a tree to make a boat. Some of the men happened to see the beautiful girl living alone in the dangerous forest. They

were excited with fear. Some of the less fearful among them said, "God or human, we will catch her and offer her to our king and receive his reward." So, many of them came forward, but she had attained such powers that they couldn't come even an arm's length of her.

She said, "I am a human being, but you cannot catch me. Go and tell your king that his two wives will be childless. Unless he wants his dynasty to end, he should marry me and I'll bear him a son."

It was true that the king had two wives, but even after many years of marriage, he had no child. The men reported the girl's words to the king. The king got angry and said, "I'll punish her who dared to say so, and if she isn't there you'll all die. Where is that woman?" And they all came to the tree, and as true as daylight, the beautiful girl was sitting under the tree. For a few moments they all gasped and looked at her in silence. The king presently ordered his men to catch her. She quickly climbed the tree, said the spell and the tree grew so tall that nobody could climb it. The king thought that she was not a simple human, what she said must be true. He looked up and said, "O! Lady. I came to punish you, but you are no ordinary person. Now, I believe your words. I have two wives, but I am issueless. If you'll be so kind as to marry me, I'll make you my queen.

I beg you to save my dynasty from extinction.”

The lady replied that she didn't believe him, so the king begged many more times. At last she said, “Alright, if you want me, bring me a palanquin, for I cannot ride a horse.”

Immediately the king arranged for one. Still she refused to come down. The king had to ask her in all ways possible until she lowered the tree and came down. As soon as she put her feet on the ground, the soldiers charged at her. But she quickly climbed the tree and it grew taller again. The king ordered the tree to be cut down. All the axes broke but the tree was unscathed. The king realised that only asking for forgiveness would bring her down. When all his men were kept away very far, he knelt down and begged again. This time she trusted his plea and came down. A wedding was performed then and there, after which the king and the queen returned in the same palanquin.

The people were merry. Some months later she was pregnant. The first two wives were envious of her. They waited for an opportunity to blame her of some guilt and get rid of her. For some days they joined the others in their happiness. But one day they told the king that she was a witch and they were scared and all sort of things. But he didn't believe them. They were disappointed but not disheartened.

They made a plot with the *maibi*. The time had come and the third queen gave birth to twin boys. The *maibi*, as told, secretly threw the babies into the river and put a stone near the queen. To the king she reported that the youngest queen was an evil witch; she bore a stone instead of a child. The king's anger knew no bounds. He was about to kill the youngest queen, and he would not listen to her explanation that she gave birth to twin boys and that they were thrown away by the two queens. As the two queens and the *maibi* were adamant with the same story, the king had to take a decision against his youngest queen. He spared her life but she was punished by cutting her hair, ears and the tongue and throwing them into the river after wrapping them in a cloth. She was abandoned into a dark corner of the palace.

Fate has strange ways of working. The two babies and the bundle of cut parts were found by the elder sister living in the river. She brought up the boys as her own sons. When they became strong enough to fend for themselves, she told them everything about them and their mother. She said, "I'm not your real mother. Your mother is my younger sister. Your father is the king of this land. The first two queens were so envious of your mother that they tried to kill you by throwing you into the river as soon as you were born. Your mother was framed

a witch and punished by cutting her hair, ears and tongue. These belong to her. Take them to her. Tell your father everything and cure your mother. Then take her and go north. You'll find a very tall mountain peak. Make your palace there and you two brothers should rule as kings."

The two brothers set out for the palace. They came to the river near the palace and stirred the water so much by playing that the whole river turned muddy. The guards could not believe two boys fouling the big river. When the king heard about it he ordered the two boys to be captured and brought to him. However, the boys could not be captured. They kept dancing and singing in the middle of the river. The king himself came down to see the two mischievous boys. Being his sons, he felt affection for the two boys at the first sight. He asked, "Who are you and where are you from? Come and be my sons, for I have none." These words made them come to the shore. The king took them to the palace and treated them as his own sons and the princes of the land. But they always stayed near their mother in the dark corner. They ate what she ate and didn't even touch the good clothes given to them. They let their mother know that they were her sons, and they had come to take her. She was never so happy in her life. She cried but could not speak.

The two queens were getting suspicious of the two boys' behaviour. They began to poison the ears of the king against the boys. Seeing that, the boys exposed, "O! foolish king. Don't you still know that we are your real sons? Your two wives made the *maibi* to throw us into the river because they were jealous of our mother."

The king, although doubtful, couldn't believe them. "Prove what you are claiming," said the king.

The boys took out the tongue, ears and the hair. "These are the body parts that you cut from out mother and threw into the river. With these we can bring her back to normal."

The overwhelmed king indeed recognised the cloth wrapping those parts. The boys placed those parts on their mother's body, and like their aunt said, she was back to normal. She hugged her sons and cried. The embarrassed king drove out his first two wives from the kingdom by shaving their heads. But his third wife refused to stay in the palace any more. She left the country with her two sons and reached Koubru to the north where they settled and ruled for the rest of their lives.



Lukhrabi Yumpham

Once there was a powerful king. The people believed that he had divine powers because his land was a land of peace and prosperity. People had enough food to eat all the year round, there were celebrations everyday, sorrow was unheard of. Even at night there was a light in the whole land and there was no darkness. This was because a wood, which was an incarnation of Pakhangba, was used in making the palace of the king. Therefore, the whole country was blessed. The neighbouring countries were afraid of the powers of this kingdom.

One of the daughters of the king was old enough to be married. She was also in love with a prince of a neighbouring land. Their parents arranged for their wedding. According to tradition, the boy had to stay at the house of the girl for two years before the marriage. So the prince came to stay at the princess' place. While he was staying there, he tried hard to find the reason for the perennial

happiness of the land. And so he found that the Pakhangba-wood in the palace was the reason.

At the end of two years of his stay, the day of wedding was decided. Arrangements were made for a grand wedding. Just before the wedding, the prince came to the princess and said, "Do not bring any dowry from your parents. On the day of the wedding, when your father asks you what you want, ask him to give you the Pakhangba-wood in the palace. Do not agree to take anything else." The princess also agreed.

Now as we have learnt a little from the prince, there was a tradition for the parents to ask their daughters one thing they wanted the most. If it was something the parents had, it was given without fail. Declining a daughter's request on the wedding day was not done. So, on the day of the wedding, the king asked his daughter what she wanted. The princess asked for the divine wood in the palace. The king was in a dilemma. He said, "My child, this wood was given to me by God. It can't be given away. Ask for anything else other than this and I'll give you." The princess was stubborn. She told her father that she would take only that and nothing else. If the king didn't give it his prestige would be harmed. But the future of his whole land depended on it. But

he agreed to give it. Many men were employed to pull down the wood from the palace, but it couldn't be pulled out. For three days they tried and only on the third day it came out. But the rope used in pulling it broke and the wood fell down the hill slope and it was lost. It was never found again. From that day death and sorrow invaded the kingdom. There were epidemic and famine.

The king was very sad. He thought himself to be an unworthy ruler. He called all his subjects and told them to migrate to other lands for there was only sorrow in their land. But his subjects didn't want to leave their good king. The king then made a heartfelt request to them saying that God was no longer kind to him. They should form groups of a few numbers of families and settle in different places, but not far from one another. Because that way, one group will know where the other was.

And so it was done. They settled in different places establishing small villages with chiefs of their own. From time to time, the king visited the different villages to see which one was living happily. The village of the family to whom his second daughter got married was doing the best among all. Those from the other villages visited this one often. The king was proud of his daughter. This village became

happier day by day. Celebrations became more frequent. The boys and girls used to work together to brew wine from rice. The rice was crushed and left overnight.

For some day they found that the rice was eaten up by some kind of animal during the night. Some young men decided to find out what it was. During the late hour of the night they saw a big snake coming out of a hole and eating the rice. The men reported the unusual incident to the whole village. The elders decided that the snake must be killed and eaten for they believed it to be evil. They caught the snake with a trap that was placed at the mouth of the hole. The people pulled out the snake from the hole. But it was a strange sight — the body of the snake kept coming out no matter how long they have pulled. The whole village could not hold the body of the snake any more. So they cut up the snake into pieces and piled it up. And then they pulled. Still the snake's body didn't end. There was no end to its body no matter how much they pulled. At last they let go of the remaining part of the serpentine body which went back into the hole with a deafening noise.

The young men and women danced around the huge pile of snake for the whole night. The next day it was cooked and the meat was distributed to each and every family. There was one old widow who lived alone in a hut at the far end of the village.

In the evening, some young boys brought a packet of the meat. Being alone, she used to eat and sleep early in the evening. That day also she was already going to bed. When the boys came, she told them to leave outside whatever they have brought, for she didn't know what it was and she didn't want to go out after she had just crept into her bed. So the boys hung the packet on a hanger in her courtyard. Everybody in the village ate the snake meat, except



the old woman. That night everybody slept as if they had been charmed. In the midnight, an animal cried out loudly. Its cry echoed from the hills in all directions. The old woman was awakened by the cry. She lay in her bed and listened for few moments. Then she thought that cry was evil. And she couldn't hear a sound from the village, which was quite queer because there was noise of celebration every night. She thought something was wrong. As she was thinking so, the ground began to shake and there was a rumbling sound under the earth. The old woman ran out of her house and shouted, "Are you all asleep? Can't anybody of you hear the rumbling?" There was not a sound, even of a hungry baby crying. Then slowly, the rumbling died down. She also went back and slept. In the morning, when she opened the door, the whole village was gone. It had sunk into the earth. The hanger in her courtyard had also sunk into the ground. All the villagers were buried. The old lady went to the other villages and told them the story.

Till today the place where the home of the old widow stood is known as '*Lukhrabi Yumpham*', and the village that sank is known as '*Leimatak*'.



The obstinate orphan

In a happy village, there lived a childless couple. After making many prayers and sacrifices, they were blessed with two girls. The parents loved the two daughters very much. They were not made to do any work. As time went on, the parents became old and the two girls grew up to be fine young girls. The parents could barely work any more. So the two girls discussed that till then their parents had given them whatever they needed, but now that their parents were old, it was their time to serve their parents. They decided to help their parents at the farm.

The next day they went to the farm with their parents. There they could finish a work in one day which would have taken their parents three days. Their parents were happy and surprised at the same time. Knowing that their daughters were already strong enough, they sent them to work by themselves.

It was already a week that they have been working at their paddy field. The elder sister used to

go to the stream to fetch water while the younger one stayed at the farmhouse. On the seventh day, the elder sister met a boy at the stream who asked her for some water. She thought who could that boy be; she had not seen him earlier. Maybe he was from another village. The boy drank the water and left after thanking her. But there was not another word from him.

From the time she saw that boy, she felt something that which she didn't know, but she couldn't take him out of her mind. The next day also he came and asked her for water. That day they inquired about each other. He said, "I am a stranger. My name is Mente, and you are..." "My name is Lyshil," she replied, "And I have a younger sister with whom I come to the farm everyday." The boy proposed that he wanted to come to the farm and help them. She was more than happy. The three of them began working together at the farm everyday. Gradually love developed between Lyshil and Mente. The younger sister knew this, but she didn't tell a word to her parents. However, she never went near the boy because he had a disgusting smell. Her sister didn't seem to notice that.

One day the two sisters asked the boy where he lived. He replied, "I have no home. I just live in

the forest. Whenever you want to see me, call me by saying '*Kamonbe-o Mente-o Kouoda cho holoba*' (Come Mente of the forest) and I will come."

After sometime, the elder sister became pregnant. She was afraid to tell her parents. The younger sister also became quite thin, because she felt disgusted and didn't take her food whenever the boy came as he had a nauseating smell. Their parents were worried to see the change in their two daughters. The parents asked the younger daughter what was going on. Then she had to tell them everything.

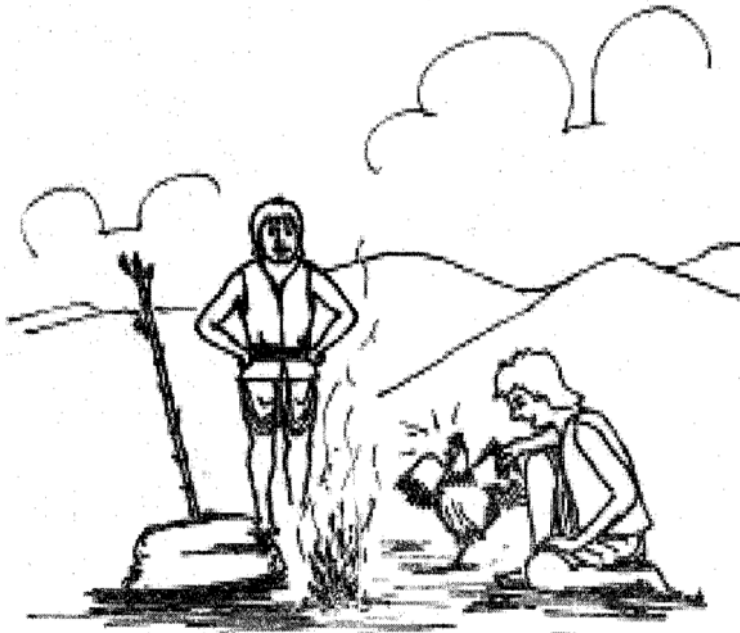
They suspected that the boy must be some form of God. In order to know the truth they asked the younger daughter to ask the boy what food he couldn't take. So, the next day, she asked. And the boy told her that he was not supposed to take garlic, turmeric, *mukthroobi* and *heimaang*. This she reported to her parents. Now the parents knew exactly who he was. They packed these things along with the food to be taken by the sisters to the farm. The elder sister knew nothing of all these. The next day when they were about to take lunch, Mente took the packet and opened it asking what was in it. As soon as he opened it he touched the four things, and then, suddenly, he turned into a big python. He looked sadly at Lyshil and went away and never came back.



Months passed. Lyshil gave birth to twins, both boys. The two boys were special. The villagers felt jealous of the boys. People wanted the boys to be thrown out of the village because nobody knew their father. Lyshil would never agree to it, so her parents raised the two

boys carefully. The bigger they grew, the more the villagers ill-treated them. Their friends teased them and quarreled with them. The twins were strong enough to take on ten boys at a time. Even a man couldn't stand in front of them. They were stronger and faster than any other in the whole village. They did things beyond their age. Their grandparents had to endure lots of complaints from the villagers for they knew that the boys were sons of God. When they couldn't bear the objection of the villagers any more, they decided to kill the two boys as they couldn't be simply thrown away. The grandfather

took them to the hill. He said, "Stand here. I will push down a stone; you catch it and bring it home." He threw down the biggest stone he could pick and dropped it on the boys. Thinking that the boys must be dead, he returned home. But after sometime, the two boys returned with the stone and placed it in front of him. Next day he made them catch a falling tree, which they did easily. After that day he no longer tested them, for he believed that they were the true sons of God. But he could not keep them in the



village anymore. So one day, the grandfather called the two of them and said, "Now I know that you are true sons of the gods. But I can't keep you any more. You must now go and find your own land to rule." And then the mother and the grandfather gave them a boulder, a cock, ashes and a stick of reed. "Remember what I am telling you. Take these things. The place where the stone falls, the cock crows, the ashes burns and the stick grows will be the place that you will make your home," said the grandfather. The two boys set out from their home carrying the four things. After many days of journey, the two of them reached the place what is now known as Mayang Imphal. Here the stone boulder fell, but the cock didn't crow, neither the ashes burnt nor the reed grew. Then taking up the stone, they continued their journey. When they reached the place now known as Langthabal, the stone fell, the ashes burnt, the cock crowed and the stick grew. There they made their home and ruled over the land happily.



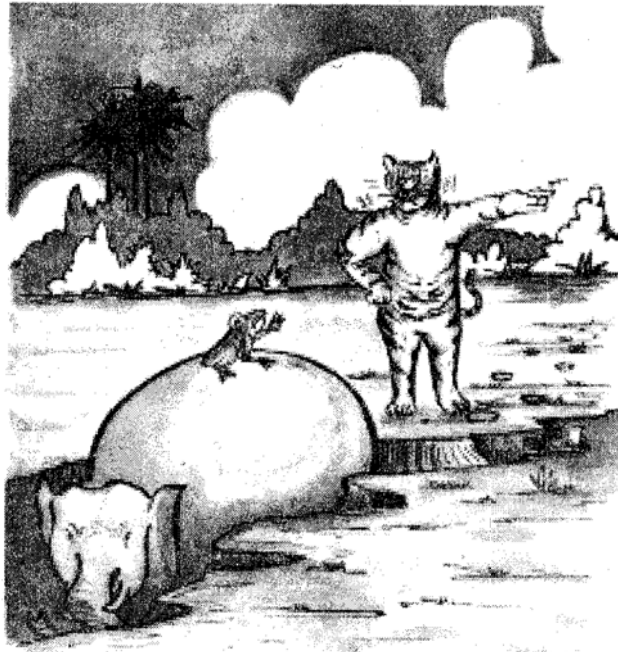
The clever frog

(From Chiru)

Once there was a forest where the animals lived their lives happily. Then one day a fierce tiger came to the forest. He started killing and eating the animals of the forest one by one. All the animals were terrified. Their peaceful lives were no longer safe. Some weaker animals even started leaving the forest to migrate to other forests.

Near the forest there was a big lake. In the lake lived an old and wise frog. As the frog was basking in the sun one morning, an elephant came running in that direction. The elephant was terrified and appeared to be running away from something. The frog thought that if the elephant ran into the lake in that way, many frogs will be trampled under its feet. So he had to stop the elephant. When the elephant was approaching him, he shouted at him, "Why are you running so fast and frightened, my friend?" The elephant answered without stopping, "There is a fierce tiger in the forest, and he is coming

to eat me. I am running away from him, *itao*." The frog tried to stop him, "Don't be afraid, my friend. I'll save you from the tiger. You just stop running. You are so big and you are afraid of the tiger?" The elephant was taken aback by the confidence of the frog. He wondered how this little creature could possibly face the toothed and clawed tiger. "You fight the tiger, I am gone, *itao*," said the elephant and started running. The frog continued, "If you are so afraid of the tiger hide in this crevice on the ground and watch how I defeat the tiger."



The elephant was ashamed to hear that. In fact he wanted to see how the frog defeated the tiger. He went down in a big crevice in the ground; but the crevice was not big enough for him to hide. Only half his body went down while the upper part of his body remained above the ground like a mound over which the frog jumped up and sat. A little while later the tiger reached there. When he saw the frog sitting on top of a mound he asked angrily, "Hey frog, have you seen an elephant coming this way?" The frog boldly replied that he hadn't. The tiger said, "Don't lie to me. He just ran this way as I was chasing him. How long have you been sitting here?" The frog replied again, "I have been here since morning. I haven't seen him."

Unable to get any information out of the frog, the tiger started looking around for the elephant. He could not see the elephant but she could see footmarks of the elephant. The footprints led to the mound over which the frog was sitting. Angrily the tiger roared at the frog, "You lied to me. You are hiding the elephant under that mound. Now show me where he is or I will kill you."

The frog replied insolently, "I'll accept that I am hiding the elephant. But we will race first. If you win, you will eat both of us, but if you lose, you must leave this forest."

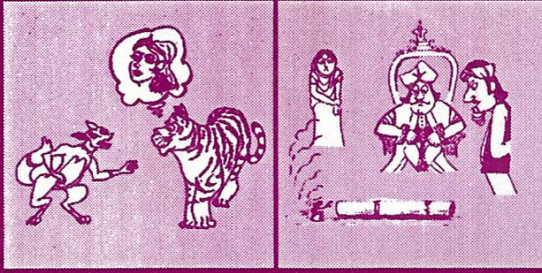


The tiger couldn't help himself laughing. He laughed till his breath was out. He said panting, "You want to race me!" and laughed again. When he had stopped laughing, he said in a contemptuous voice, "Let us race then. Where do you want to start and how far do you want to run?"

The frog wasn't at all intimidated by the tiger. He replied as boldly as ever, "Wherever you want to race is acceptable to me. But if you lose, do not forget what I said." The tiger agreed and got ready to race. The frog also got ready. "Both of us will clap three times together and start running," said the frog. So they clapped three times and the race began. But as soon as the tiger started running, the frog jumped on the back of the tiger and sat there. The tiger was thinking only of his running and so didn't know that the frog was on his back. He ran and ran, but soon got tired because he was already tired of

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